Hafa Adai!

OPA's Diaz earns CFE designation. PAGE 3

Dec. 26 is the last day to apply for PUA, FPUC. PAGE 5

Volume XXX, Issue No. 250
THURSDAY DECEMBER 17, 2020
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Saipan Tribune

75¢

OPERATION CHRISTMAS DROP
Airmen from the 374th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron out of Yokota Air Base, Japan, inspect the propellers of a C-130J Super Hercules during Operation Christmas Drop 2020 at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam last Dec. 9. For the past 69 years, the Christmas drops serve as a proving ground for the techniques used and shared with regional partners in preparation for response to natural disasters all too common across this region. This year, Operation Christmas Drop started last Dec. 6.
U.S. AIR FORCE/STAFF SGT. DIVINE COX

Vaccines expected today

The CNMI expects to receive its first shipment of COVID-19 vaccines this morning, Dec. 17, 2020.

According to a Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. statement early last night, the vaccines, which the Food and Drug Administration authorized last Friday for emergency use, started being shipped to all 50 states and U.S. territories early this week. The vaccine, made by Pfizer and BioNTech, is to be given in two doses, 21 days apart.

The first shipment of vac-

See VACCINES on Page 4

AT A GLANCE

As of 6pm, Dec. 16, 2020

GUAM	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	7,149	19	7,168
Recovered	6,511	2	6,513
Active	517	19	536
Deaths	119	0	119
Cumulative Number of Persons Tested			96,512

SAIPAN	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	113	0	113
Traced via Travel Screening	86	0	86
Traced via Community Screening	27	0	27
Deaths	2	0	2
Cumulative Number of Persons Tested			22,633*
Days since last community transmission			120

*Total count includes the number of persons tested on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. With guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CHCC has opted not to report active and recovered cases.

Source: Joint Information Center - Guam, Commonwealth Health Care Corp.

COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY

LEGEND:
- **Red:** Least safe
- **Orange**
- **Yellow**
- **Blue**
- **Green:** Safest

Source: Office of the Governor

Majority in 22nd House a toss-up

Yumul

» Talks circulating Yumul will align with Democrats

» Torres: Regardless of who the majority is, they need to work together

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The question of which bloc will be the majority in the coming 22nd House of Representatives next month will be a toss-up between the traditionally dominant Repub-

See MAJORITY on Page 4

Cassidy Torres wins DPL essay contest

FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Cassidy Torres, a junior at Chapman University in Orange, California, won first place in the Department of Public Lands' inaugural Schol-

See CASSIDY on Page 4

Department of Public Lands Secretary Marianne Concepcion-Teregeyo joins four of the eight winners in the Department of Public Lands' First Annual Scholarship Essay Contest after the awarding ceremony yesterday afternoon. Also in the photo are DPL officials and some of the investors who sponsored the contest.
FERDIE DE LA TORRE

Ada retained for another year

By JUSTINE NAUTA
justine_nauta@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Four of the five-person Board of Education voted yesterday to retain Education Commissioner Dr. Alfred B. Ada at the helm of the Public School System for another year.

Ada

During yesterday's virtual meeting of the 16th BOE, board chair Janice A. Tenorio, BOE vice chair Herman Atalig, and board members Andrew L. Orsini and Antonio L. Borja all voted to

See ADA on Page 4

INSIDE

LOCAL
For the ROTC cadets at Northern Marianas College, COVID-19 has created a new challenge.

PAGE 6

BUSINESS
Starting Dec. 21, Pacific Island Club Saipan will start its Winter Camp for children.

PAGE 14

ASIA
South Korea has reported another high in daily coronavirus increases of 1,078 cases.

PAGE 16

SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

Local

Sherman Consulting LLC certified as a HUBZone entity

Tinian-based Sherman Consulting was recently certified as an official HUBZone entity by the U.S. Small Business Administration.

The HUBZone program was created for small companies that operate and employ people in Historically Underutilized Business Zones or HUBZones. As a HUBZone-certified business, Sherman Consulting LLC is eligible to compete for the program's set-aside U.S. federal contracts and receive a 10% price evaluation preference in full and open contract competitions.

"The HUBZone certification strengthens our capabilities to compete on an adjusted playing field [that] favors businesses that do business in our region," said Phillip T. Mendiola Long, CEO of Sherman Consulting. "It is our hope that this HUBZone certification brings value to both federal agencies and prime contractors as they can see what 'local' companies can accomplish at the same or at a higher level than our U.S. mainland competitors. We're proud to be certified by the SBA HUBzone program and to be a part of 'localized' job creation in this economically challenging part of the Western Pacific region."

The CNMI currently has only 13 HUBzone-certified firms, with Mendiola-Long's Sherman Consulting and his other company, Tinian Fuel Services, Inc., being the only two certified on Tinian.

Sherman Consulting LLC was created to nurture, assist, and manage foreign and U.S. domestic firms that do business in the Micronesian region. Operating since 1998, the firm has been responsible for over $150 million in direct investments in the region and manages operations for over 10 different U.S. and foreign firms within the CNMI. Mendiola-Long, Sherman Consulting's principal, is considered the region's expert in the U.S. military buildup and has been involved in military construction consulting for over 15 years. ***(PR)***

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Saipan
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1 Night Stay in our Deluxe Garden View Room
Free upgrade to Deluxe Ocean View Upon Availability
Check-In 10:00am & Check-Out 5:00pm
50% Off on all beverages for your entire stay
$140.00 per room, per night
Oceanfront Suite
1 Night Stay in our Deluxe Oceanfront Suite
Check-In (10:00am) & Check-Out (5:00pm)
50% Off on all beverages for your entire stay
$250.00 per room, per night
DINE & RELAX Staycation PACKAGE
Deluxe Garden View
1 Night Stay in Deluxe Garden View Room
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Dining for 2 at Costa's Christmas Buffet, Kevin's, Seafood Night or Sunday Brunch!
Check-In 10:00am & Check-Out 5:00pm
$180.00 per room, per night
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1 Night Stay in Deluxe Oceanfront Suite
Dining for 2 at Costa's Christmas Buffet, Kevin's, Seafood Night or Sunday Brunch!
Check-In 10:00am & Check-Out 5:00pm
50% Off on all beverages for your entire stay
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Includes TWO FREE PIZZAS!!!
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*15% Government Tax will be added to the total room charges
*Benefits may not be transferred, exchanged or redeemed for cash
*Benefits may not be combined with any other specials or promotions
*All benefits should be used during stay duration checked-in times only
*Facilities and benefits are for the use of registered guests only
*Valid CNMI or Guam resident ID required for special promotional rates

House bill gives Cannabis Commission access to fees

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The House of Representatives unanimously passed Tuesday afternoon on first and final reading a bill that gives the Commonwealth Cannabis Commission access to the license fees and other charges it generates for its daily operations.

Authored by Rep. Janet U. Maratita (R-Saipan), House Bill 21-130 now goes to the Senate for action.

The bill repeals and re-enacts a provision of the Taulamwaar Sensible CNMI Cannabis Act of 2018, mandating that all license fees and application fees shall be placed in an account separate from the general fund and considered special revenue to pay for the operational expenses of the Cannabis Commission. The funds in this account shall be in a revolving fund that shall not lapse at the end of the fiscal year and shall not be subject to any fiscal year limitations.

Maratita said she filed the bill at the request of the Cannabis Commission and its managing director.

Maratita said the Legislature has not appropriated funds to the commission other than the Saipan Northern Islands Legislative Delegate's $25,000.

Right now, she said, the Cannabis Commission has collected over $11,000 and that, according to the Finance secretary, they cannot expend or use the money without legislative appropriation.

"I must emphasize that I'm not a supporter of the cannabis industry, but because it's here, I believe it's my duty now to, you know, see how we can see the industry thrive," Maratita said.

SAIPAN HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
Office of the Mayor
Municipality of Saipan

NOTICE OF REGULAR SHEFA BOARD MEETING

In accordance with 1 CMC § 9901 et seq., as amended, the Saipan Higher Education Financial Assistance December 17th, 2020 at 9:30 am at the SHEFA Conference Room, 2nd Floor, CTC Building, Oleai, Beach Road, Saipan.

AGENDA

I. **Preliminary Matters**
   1. Roll call
   2. Adoption of agenda
   3. Adoption of Minutes from November 25th, 2020

II. **Public Comment**

III. **Reports**
   1. Administrator
   2. Chair
   3. Committee
      a. Committee on Awards
      b. Committee on Appeal/Deferments/Forbearance
      c. Committee on Policy and Procedures
      d. Committee on Program and Development
      e. Committee of Fiscal, Legislative and Community Affairs

IV. **Old Business**
   1. Requirement to start first 2 years within Saipan based institutions
   2. Service obligation of active military personnel/reservist

V. **New Business**
   1. Spring 2021 application status

VI. **Executive Session**

VII. **Misc.**

VIII. **Next Meeting**

IX. **Adjournment**

Note: Meeting may continue the following day should the need arise.

ATTENTION
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OPA's Diaz earns CFE designation

Joshua James Dela Cruz Diaz of the Office of the Public Auditor has passed the examination to gain the designation of Certified Fraud Examiner, or CFE, by the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners.

In order to become a CFE, Diaz met a stringent set of criteria and passed a rigorous exam administered by the ACFE while also agreeing to abide by the CFE code of professional ethics. Diaz has also demonstrated knowledge in four areas critical to the fight against fraud: fraudulent financial transactions, fraud prevention and deterrence, legal elements of fraud and fraud investigation.

Diaz

Diaz joins four other staff who have also earned their CFE designations. The preparation materials and exam itself was made accessible to Diaz and his colleagues through the Technical Assistance Program or TAP grant awarded by the Department of the Interior's Office of Insular Affairs.

Diaz has been employed with OPA since February 2018 and is currently an auditor. He graduated from the University of Guam with a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice and a minor in Public Administration in 2017 and earned a master's degree in Public Administration from Indiana Wesleyan University in 2020. He is currently pursuing a Doctorate of Public Administration and is expected to complete his DPA in 2024. Aside from in-house training at OPA, Diaz also attended a two-week training program called the Lakewood Experience sponsored by the Department of Interior's Office of the Inspector General in Lakewood, Colorado, in August 2019 as well as various trainings offered by the Association of Pacific Island Public Auditors and the USA Graduate School.

The ACFE is the world's largest anti-fraud organization and premier provider of

See OPA's on Page 4

RODNEY S. CABARLES, Chairman · JOSEPH T. SAN NICOLAS, Board Member · JOANNA C. ALDAN, Board Member · RINGO C. REYES, Board Member · VACANT, Board Member

MUNICIPAL SCHOLARSHIP OFFICE

Municipality of Tinian and Aguiguan
P.O. Box 520059 · San Jose Village · Tinian, MP 96952
E-Mail: tinianscholarship@gmail.com
Telephone: (670) 433-0504 | Facsimile: (670) 433-0504

PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to 1 CMC § 9910(a), the Tinian Municipal Scholarship Board hereby gives notice that there will be a Regular Meeting on Tuesday, December 22, 2020 at 5:00 p.m. at the Tinian Public Library, San Jose Village Tinian.

AGENDA

I. PRELIMINARY
- A. Call to Order
- B. Roll Call
- C. Adoption of Agenda
- D. Adoption of Minutes
  - August 05, 2020 (TMSB Special Meeting)
  - October 15, 2020 (TMSB Regular Meeting)
  - October 23, 2020 (TMSB Special Meeting)

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS

III. NEW BUSINESS
- A. Election of Officers
  - Vice Chairman
  - Secretary
  - Treasurer
- B. Discussion of possible deadline extension for Spring 2021 applications
- C. Budget

IV. MISCELLANEOUS

V. SCHEDULE OF NEXT BOARD MEETING

VI. EXECUTIVE SESSION

VII. ADJOURNMENT

/s/ Rodney S. Cabarles
Chairman

[1]We ask that remarks be limited to 3 minutes each. Everyone is welcome to submit written comments on the day of the meeting.
[2]Pursuant to 1 CMC section 9912, the Board may vote to meet in executive session at any time..
[3]Individuals with special needs requiring special accommodations, please contact the TMSB office at least 48 hours prior to schedule meeting for assistance.

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YEAR-END CLEARANCE SALE
MANY VEHICLES UNDER COST! LIMITED TIME ONLY!
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2018 MITSUBISHI **MIRAGE** HATCHBACK
34,479 MILES
STK: 20H097A
SALE PRICE **$7,995**
KBB: $8,954

2013 FORD **TAURUS** ECO
77,580 MILES
STK: 3P281
SALE PRICE **$6,995**
KBB: $9,542

2015 MAZDA **MAZDA3** SPORT
18,543 MILES
STK: 20D137A
SALE PRICE **$9,995**
KBB: $15,497

2014 FIAT **500C** CONVERTIBLE — SOLD
SALE PRICE **$7,995**
KBB: $7,365

2017 HYUNDAI **ACCENT** GLS
16,979 MILES • STK: 7HS824
SALE PRICE **$9,995**
KBB: $13,650

2017 HYUNDAI **ACCENT** GLS
21,585 MILES • STK:7HS772
SALE PRICE **$9,995**
KBB: $13,463

2017 HYUNDAI **ACCENT** GLS
54,175 MILES • STK:9H106A
SALE PRICE **$9,995**
KBB: $11,986

2015 MAZDA **MAZDA3** SPORT — SOLD
SALE PRICE **$9,995**
KBB: $15,497

2017 HYUNDAI **ACCENT** GLS
39,201 MILES • STK:7R220
SALE PRICE **$9,995**
KBB: $12,682

2016 MAZDA **MAZDA3** SPORT
27,499 MILES • STK:6HS714
SALE PRICE **$11,995**
KBB: $17,303

2019 MAZDA **CX-3** SPORT
11,103 MILES • STK:19HS981
SALE PRICE **$12,995**
KBB: $19,355

2017 MAZDA **MAZDA3** SPORT
34,789 MILES • STK:7R218
SALE PRICE **$13,995**
KBB: $15,129

2017 MAZDA **MAZDA3** SPORT
34,648 MILES • STK:20M094A
SALE PRICE **$13,995**
KBB: $14,967

2016 KIA **SEDONA** LX
29,307 MILES • STK:6HS764
SALE PRICE **$13,995**
KBB: $19,154

2019 MAZDA **CX-3** SPORT
5,103MILES • STK:9P286
SALE PRICE **$13,995**
KBB: $19,946

2017 MAZDA **CX-3** GT
4,550MILES • STK: 19D204A
SALE PRICE **$14,995**
KBB: $19,882

2018 MAZDA **MAZDA3** SPORT
8,730 MILES • STK:8HS878
SALE PRICE **$14,995**
KBB: $19,449

2018 MAZDA **MAZDA3** SPORT
11,625 MILES • STK:8HS884
SALE PRICE **$14,995**
KBB: $19,554

2018 MAZDA **MAZDA3** SPORT
7,910 MILES • STK:8HS875
SALE PRICE **$14,995**
KBB: $19,496

2006 TOYOTA **TACOMA** SR5
97,531MILES • STK: 6P297
SALE PRICE **$14,995**
KBB: $15,495

2018 MAZDA **MAZDA6** SPORT
7,365 MILES • STK: 18HS965C
SALE PRICE **$16,995**
KBB: $22,095

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COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Emergency power interruption today

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. would like to inform the public that there will be an emergency power interruption today, Dec. 17, 2020, from 2:30pm to 4:30pm affecting Lower Base, Puerto Rico, and Lower Navy Hill

- Water Well Affected: PR164
- Wastewater Facility Affected: Sadog Tasi Treatment Plant

The purpose of the emergency power interruption is to de-energize utility lines such that CUC linemen are able to replace rusted bolts on a primary pole in Puerto Rico. Because of the scale of work that will be performed, CUC asks travelers to take alternate routes or to exercise caution when driving through the working area.

CUC continues to work diligently to minimize any inconvenience to its customers. For more information, contact the CUC Hotline at 236-4333 or monitor our Facebook page for the latest updates. ***(PR)***

CWA raffle drawing tomorrow

The CNMI Women's Association's 2nd Annual Fun-Raise-Her Virtual Raffle Drawing will be held tomorrow, Dec. 18. The raffle drawing will be held live on the CWA Facebook page.

First place is $1,000, second place is $750, and third place is $400. There are 16 other raffle prizes at stake. Raffle tickets are only $20 each.

Raffle tickets are still on sale until today, Thursday. If you would like to purchase tickets, contact Dorina Ogumoro-Iginoef at 233-8978/9411.

The CWA's mission is to empower women for leadership as guardians of our *guinaha* (assets) and a vision to embolden CNMI women to be fully engaged in the political, economic, and social development of the Commonwealth. Proceeds will support programming events and activities in support of CWA's mission. ***(PR)***

Workers want default judgement vs IPI

By KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
kimberly_bautista@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A group of H-2B construction workers from Turkey have asked the U.S District Court for the NMI to enter a default judgement in their favor in their lawsuit against Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC.

Richard Miller, who represents plaintiffs Ozcan Genc, Hasan Gokce, and Suleyman Kos, asked the court for a default judgement because IPI has failed to plead or defend itself within 21 days.

"More than 21 days have passed since the defendants were served with the summons and complaint and neither have served a responsive pleading or filed a motion within the time provided by [the rules]," Miller stated.

According to *Saipan Tribune* archives, Genc, Gokce, and Kos filed the complaint against IPI and IDS Development Management & Consultancy for allegedly forcing them to eat nontraditional food, for allegedly not paying them the minimum wage and overtime, and for allegedly not paying them their salaries since Oct. 1. The workers are also accusing the defendants of retaliation for the workers' protest actions.

The plaintiffs claim that IPI promised the Turkish workers that it would hire a cook who could prepare the kind of food that suits them. They were also promised above-minimum wage, substantial overtime pay, and roundtrip tickets.

However, the workers said, the meals IPI gave them were "practically inedible" for Turkish people so they ended up buying their own food and cooking for themselves. It was not immediately clear if their opposition to the food was for other than the reason they cited in the complaint.

Aside from IPI allegedly breaking its promise to hire a cook that specializes in Turkish food, the Turkish workers ultimately had to borrow money from acquaintances for their travel costs and other expenses.

The group stated they also weren't paid the wages they were promised.

The plaintiffs said their work hours were drastically cut and all overtime work was eliminated since June. Then payroll delays started last June 19.

IPI allegedly did not provide them pay stubs so they did not see the deductions made on their salaries.

In addition, health insurance premiums were allegedly deducted from their paycheck, but when they got sick and went to the Commonwealth Health Center they were told that their health insurance coverage had been suspended for nonpayment of premiums.

When the workers stopped work on Sept. 11 for three weeks in protest, they said IPI stopped providing them with drinking water and internet services at their barracks and also stopped their access to company vehicles in October.

MAJORITY

From Page 1

lican Party and a resurgent Democratic Party.

This developed as there is persistent talks that Rep. Ralph N. Yumul, who is identified with the Republican Party, is going to align himself with the Democratic Party, a move that will likely make the Democrats the new majority.

As of press time yesterday, *Saipan Tribune* was still waiting for Yumul to comment on the matter. It will be noted that he voted with the minority in a resolution during a House session last Tuesday.

At the last Nov. 3 general elections for the House race, eight Democrats, nine Republicans, and three independents won.

The victorious Democrats are Edwin K. Propst, Celina Babauta, Christina-Marie Elise Sablan, Denita Kaipat Yangetmai, Sheila Therese Jack Babauta, Leila Haveia Fleming Clark Staffler, Richard Tudela Lizama, and Vicente Castro Camacho.

The prevailing Republicans are Joseph Lee Pan Tenorio Guerrero, Roy Christopher Aldan Ada, Angel Demapan, John Paul Sablan, Blas Jonathan Tenorio Attao, Ivan Alafanson Blanco, Ralph Naraja Yumul, Joel Castro Camacho, and Patrick Hofschneider San Nicolas.

The three victorious independents are Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez, Joseph Flores, and Donald Manalang Manglona.

Villagomez and Manglona have already aligned with the Democrats, making the Democrats 10. Flores is aligned with the Republicans, making the Republicans 10, and thus creating a tie.

If Yumul will align with the Democrats, this will break the tie and the Democrats will become the majority.

When asked if he is confident that the Republicans will still be the House majority when the 22nd Legislature is sworn in, Gov. Ralph DLG Torres stated last week that the GOP has the numbers. Torres said they just have to wait and see on what that discussion is moving into the inauguration of the members of the 22nd Legislature.

"But at the end of the day, we are all elected here," said Torres, adding that, regardless what happens at the inauguration, they are bound to protect and provide safety, education, and health to the community.

"And so that's my take—that we need to continue to move forward," he said

The governor said they still need to work together, regardless of who is the majority or who's the minority.

"[The] election is done. And that's more important to me that we need to address our issues and come up with new revenues across the board and we move forward," Torres said.

CASSIDY

From Page 1

arship Essay Contest.

Torres, who majors in business administration, will receive the $1,250 award, which was sponsored by Saipan Triple Star Corp. She was not present during the awarding ceremony yesterday afternoon at the DPL conference room at the Joeten Dandan building.

DPL Secretary Marianne Concepcion-Teregeyo and her special assistant, Deveney Dela Cruz, awarded the prizes to the top five winners and three additional prize winners who are all students of Northern Marianas descent.

A total of 51 students joined the scholarship essay competition, which DPL is planning as an annual contest.

Rafael Mafnas, a senior at California State Polytechnic University in Pomona and majoring in construction engineering, grabbed second place. He was not present at the ceremony, but will receive $1,000 award sponsored by Bibong Corp.

Victoria Bellas, a junior at the Northern Marianas College who is working on a bachelor's degree in Business Management and an associate degree in Liberal Arts with a concentration in social work, won third place and received the $1,000 award sponsored by Bibong Corp.

Bellas said she's just grateful for this opportunity as it's a little bit harder this year to find stable work and resources to help pay for school dur to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since attending NMC, Bellas said she's been very passionate about finishing her degrees "so it's pretty nice to have this award since I've been working very hard. But not only that, it's a very interesting prompt, you know, because we are all beneficiaries of our islands, of public lands," Bellas said.

She said she felt like it was relevant and important for her to speak on preserving public lands and how future generations can benefit from that.

Bellas said she did not expect to win but just tried her best and explained matters from her point of view. "It's from the heart," she added.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

VACCINES

From Page 1

cines will be administered to CHCC staff, responder agencies, and private clinics providing health-related services, including dental, hemodialysis, pharmacy, behavioral, home care, optometry, physical therapy and rehabilitation. Individuals included in this group should expect registration information from CHCC.

The COVID-19 vaccine will be available to everyone living in the CNMI through a three-phased approach. In line with the CNMI's COVID-19 Vaccination Plan, approved by Operation Warp Speed and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the CNMI implementation plan will be (based on recommended guidance for priority and vaccine availability):

- Phase 1: An estimated 1,600 people working in health care settings, first responder agencies, and vulnerable populations.
- Phase 2: Expanding to essential workers and the general population. The essential worker population includes but is not limited to: Private pharmacy staff, instructional staff of the Public School System, PSS school support staff, PSS school administrators, and child care workers.
- Phase 3: Continuation of general population and possible vaccination opportunity for children under the age of 15.

As the CNMI COVID-19 Vaccination plans are operationalized, the CHCC outpatient clinics and hospital services will continue to be available as normal.

For more information about the CNMI's COVID-19 Vaccine efforts visit www.VaccinateCNMI.

ADA

From Page 1

retain Ada for another year until his next evaluation in December 2021. Marylou Ada abstained from voting as she was not present at the closed-door meeting last Dec. 9 to evaluate the PSS chief.

"As PSS continues to navigate these unprecedented times, it is necessary to have an effective and dedicated commissioner. Dr. Alfred Ada has been a leader throughout this pandemic, economic recession, and significant budget shortfall," said Atalig, adding that the BOE has noted that Ada continues to work weekends and late nights to find solutions that will give PSS students the best education. "…The board is confident in your leadership ability and the direction you have taken the PSS. Consequently, as the leader of such a large organization, which requires your full-time attention and having us evaluate you very positively, I, therefore, move that you will continue to be our commissioner of education in our great PSS."

The term of the education commissioner usually lasts four years but it is a standard procedure for the commissioner to be evaluated every year.

Saipan Tribune was unable as of press time to obtain comments from Ada.

In related news, two teachers have been placed on the ballot for the runoff election for teacher representative on the BOE. The two candidates are Phyllis Ain of William S. Reyes Elementary School (literacy coach) and Frank Lee Borja of Saipan Southern High School.

Prior to the runoff election, Ada named Ain, Borja, Lizabeth Hofschneider of Tinian Junior High School, and Kyle Munn of Kagman High School as the top four candidates for teacher rep. They all met the eligibility requirements for the teacher representative election, Ada said, adding that the electronic voting started on Dec. 2 and ended on Dec. 8. Under BOE policy, a teacher representative will be selected through primary, general, and runoff elections.

The last teacher rep was Paul Miura, who was appointed to the post, after nine years of the seat being vacant. Miura's last day as teacher rep. was last Nov. 30. Miura, a teacher at Saipan Southern High School, was the CNMI Teacher of the Year for 2014.

The teacher rep is a non-voting member of the BOE.

OPA'S

From Page 3

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Dec. 26 is the last day to apply for PUA and FPUC

The CNMI Department of Labor is announcing that there are only nine days until the application period for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance and Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation expires. CNMI DOL urges first-time applicants to submit an online application on or before Dec. 26, 2020.

In consideration of the application deadline falling on a Saturday, the department is only extending the paper application submission period through Monday, Dec. 28, 2020. Any paper claim submitted after Dec. 28, 2020, will be rejected.

Eligible claimants who are currently submitting weekly certifications may continue to do so one to two weeks after the application deadline has passed, as stated in the PUA/FPUC Benefits Rights Information handbook.

The PUA program provides temporary benefits to individuals whose employment or self-employment has been lost or interrupted as a direct result of COVID-19. Individuals, who receive at least one dollar ($1) of PUA benefits for a week will also receive an additional $600 supplemental payment under the FPUC program. Contact the CNMI DOL for further program details.

Claimants may apply for PUA/FPUC online. Submit an online application at: www.hiremarianas.com.

Applications and other forms may also be obtained and submitted at either of the following locations:

SAIPAN:
CNMI Department of Labor
Division of Employment Services,
Building # 1334, Ascencion Dr.
Capitol Hill, Saipan MP 96950

TINIAN:
Edu's Plaza, 1st Floor
San Jose Village, Tinian, MP 96952

ROTA:
Sinapalo Youth Center
Sinapalo 1
Rota, MP 96951

General program inquiries
Individuals who have questions about the PUA/FPUC programs are encouraged to contact the department via email at info@puamarianas.com or call the following numbers: 322-8870/8871/8872/8873/8874/8876/8877/8878/8879/8890 or 989-9190/9192/9193/9194 between 8am and 4pm, Monday to Friday.

Individuals who willfully conceal material facts or knowingly make false statement(s) to obtain PUA to which they are not entitled will be required to repay all benefits fraudulently collected and may be subject to prosecution under 18 U.S.C. 1001. ***(PR)***

Man pleads guilty to choking girlfriend

By KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
kimberly_bautista@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A man who allegedly choked his girlfriend and hurt a 1-year-old boy while drunk has pleaded guilty and was sentenced to one year in prison, all suspended except for 15 days, and was given credit for nine days of time served.

John Rasiang, 47, pleaded guilty to one count of assault and battery before Superior Court Associate Judge Joseph N. Camacho. Rasiang must serve the remainder of his sentence day to day at the Department of Corrections without the possibility of parole. Upon his release from prison, Rasiang will begin 24 months of probation, and must not have any harmful or threatening contact with the victim. He is also required to pay $25 in court costs and $120 a year for probation at least two months before the end of his probation. Rasiang must also serve 50 hours of community service, to be completed 30 days before the expiration of his probation.

He is not allowed to consume any illegal controlled substances, and must obey all CNMI and federal laws or risk having his probation revoked and face contempt of court charges.

In addition, Rasiang is required to submit to an alcohol evaluation by the Office of Adult Probation and abide by and complete any treatment recommended by the office.

He is required to continue counseling, complete parenting classes, and obey all rules of the Office of Adult Probation.

According to court documents, Rasiang was arrested in August for hitting, grabbing, and pushing to the ground a female household member.

Rasiang told authorities that he has no memory of what happened and that he had blacked out.

He and his family had gone out to a farm where they ate, drank beer, and played cards. He said he had drunk about a dozen cans of beer, and the last thing he recalled was preparing to leave the farm.

He later woke up at Coral Ocean Point beach in his vehicle, then drove to a store where he was picked up by authorities for child abuse or neglect, strangulation, and disturbing the peace.

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ROTC teacher goes through quarantine to ensure cadets are trained

By MICHAEL MADDOX
U.S. ARMY CADET COMMAND (ARMY ROTC)

Many ROTC programs have had to adjust the way they teach classes and do training in the current COVID-19 environment—finding new, safe ways to ensure cadets are still receiving the training needed to someday commission as second lieutenants.

For the ROTC cadets at Northern Marianas College on Saipan, COVID-19 created a new challenge—quarantine restrictions meant they wouldn't have an ROTC instructor on the island for the entire semester. With their instructor living in quarantine on the island of Guam, the NMC cadets were hoping for a miracle.

Capt. Thomas Vu, assistant professor of Military Science and officer-in-charge of training for the NMC ROTC program, came up with plan to train NCC's ROTC cadets in person earlier this year—by going into quarantine for them.

"Before COVID-19 hit, I was actively involved with cadets, staff and training at NMC because I am a primary teacher for MSL1 and Leadership in Physical Conditioning at NMC while also teaching ROTC at the University of Guam where I live. I travel every month to Saipan to teach at Northern Marianas College," he said. "After COVID-19 hit, I wanted to meet cadets face-to-face and show them that we had not forgotten about them."

Vu provided instruction for the Saipan cadets for a week in late October of this year. The classes were held at Northern Marianas College. Vu said there were 22 cadets registered for fall 2020, but the classrooms could only hold 10 students at a time, causing the students to have to be split into two sessions.

Vu decided to teach the cadets in person to make sure they didn't get left behind due to various electronic connection issues students were having.

"I had taught two online sessions with them from Guam and not many were able to take part due to connection issues, or they didn't have a computer, smartphone or WiFi to get online. I expressed my concerns to the PMS and said I wanted to travel down to Saipan to teach them in person," Vu explained. "I called [the CNMI Department of Public Health] and found out there have been zero cases of community transmission within the last four months, so I knew the chance of me getting COVID-19 [on] Saipan was very low.

"I got tested for COVID-19 three days before leaving Guam to go down to Saipan, and when I arrived [on] Saipan I was tested again at the airport and had another COVID-19 test five days later while I was in quarantine," he added. "I was released from quarantine Oct. 22 and we conducted our first physical fitness training at 6am the next day with in class instruction later that day."

During his time on Saipan, Vu taught classes about Army Leadership, Basic Map Reading, Basic Land Navigation, the U.S Army, Basic First Aid, the Profession of Arms, the Seven Army Values, and the Warrior Ethos.

At the end of the week of instruction, Vu took another COVID-19 test the day before he headed back to Guam, and was quarantined for 10 days in Guam and took another COVID-19 test before going back to his normal duties at the University of Guam.

Vu said all of the testing and quarantines were worth the risks to ensure the cadets were still able to complete their military science classes.

Vu

"I volunteered because I had seen what [Super] Typhoon Yutu did to Saipan in 2018, and the Saipan community had been devastated and hasn't been able to recover totally yet. However, ROTC enrollment down [on] Saipan has increased by 200% compared to the previous year and I didn't want to lose any of our cadets," he said. "I thought if I can teach them in person, I can show them what right looks like and share with them the concrete experience of Army leadership and leading by example.

"I am the first leadership that can mentor and coach them since this is usually their first interaction with any Army officer. They are still young and don't have any bad habits as leaders yet; this allowed me to mentor, coach and counseling them properly to instill those values," he added.

Cadet Kody Babauta said he felt fortunate to have Vu come in to provide training in person.

"We are lucky to have an instructor like Capt. Vu come to Saipan and teach at NMC during this pandemic. Our classes with Capt. Vu were very informative and fun to all the cadets. Everyone had a great time during his instruction here on Saipan and all the cadets enjoyed it, from his class sessions to morning PT. We appreciated his willingness to sacrifice his time and health to fly over and teach face-to-face classes for us," he said.

Cadet Tyrell Ngewakl said he took the lesson of Army values to heart by Vu's example. "I feel like his sacrifice is absolutely the embodiment of selfless service," he said. "Giving up 15 days—half a month—just to teach all of us here on Saipan shows us all about how great a leader is from the Army. He is an inspiration I intend to reach on in the future so that I may inspire those who fall under me."

Cadet Frannie Manibusan echoed his sentiments. "It was great to see Capt. Vu again. Due to the pandemic, I understand the hardships that must have been going on, but I am grateful that he sacrificed and took the time to come to Saipan to teach and train us," she said. "His sacrifice shows me his continued commitment to not just the Army but to us NMC cadets. Since I've met Capt. Vu, he has always encouraged, inspired, and motivated me to keep pushing through and never giving up. He has consistently shown me that he cares about myself and the other NMC cadets and our progress in the program. He has helped me become a better version of me, I am forever grateful to have met him and have him as my mentor."

Army ROTC produces approximately 70% of the officers entering the Army each year and is available through nearly 1,000 college campuses nationwide ranging from Harvard to Berkley, from Tufts to Ohio State. Army ROTC teaches leadership and discipline, management techniques, cultural awareness, and problem solving. Those who participate in Army ROTC and subsequently serve as Army officers develop leadership and managerial skills that last a lifetime.

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Websites to help you choose a plan:

- Aetna International: **www.AetnaInternational.com/cnmi-ghli**
- CNMI Dept of Finance: **www.dof.gov.mp**
- Pacifica Insurance Underwriters, Inc.: **www.pacificains.com/ghlit**

Upon completing an Enrollment/Change of Status Form, deliver your Form and any required documentation:

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Open enrollment ends Friday, December 18.

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Opinion

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EDITORIAL

Thank you to everyone who made a COVID vaccine in 2020 possible

For the past eight years, Dec. 14 has marked one of the most tragic moments in recent American history. On this day in 2012, a disturbed young man walked into Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., with a semiautomatic firearm and killed 26 people, 20 of whom were children.

From this year on, however, Dec. 14 will be also be known as the day in which the nation's efforts to stop another deadly scourge bore fruit, as the first COVID-19 vaccine doses were administered to health care workers around the country, giving a downcast nation hope that the end of this deadly scourge is finally in sight.

It's not the end of the COVID-19 pandemic by a long shot. But with the launch Monday of the most ambitious immunization operation in U.S. history, the end is in sight. Barring unforeseen problems with production, distribution or safety, vaccines will be available to the general public in late spring or summer. Until then, we still have months to go during which social distancing, face masks and restrictions on gatherings and businesses will be necessary.

That we have reached this point just a year after SARS-CoV-2 was first identified is a remarkable feat of science, political will, and government mobilization. And for this we are profoundly grateful to the many people whose hard work, vision and personal sacrifice made it possible.

Thank you to the scientists who started working on the vaccine in February, even before it was clear how widespread the pandemic would become. Thank you to the thousands of clinical trial volunteers who risked their health to take an experimental vaccine for the benefit of others. Thank you to the government officials who worked to limit the bureaucratic red tape that typically makes vaccine development a years-long process, and for doing it without compromising safety controls. And thanks, too, to President Trump.

That's right. Though the Trump administration bungled so much about the COVID-19 response, making the U.S. a global embarrassment and the world's leader in cases, hospitalizations and deaths, its Operation Warp Speed delivered.

Of course, it came with a cost. Another sad note for Dec. 14 is that it is the day in which the U.S. reached 300,000 COVID-19 deaths. No matter how much credit Trump gets for helping to usher in a COVID-19 vaccine, it doesn't absolve him of all the other ways in which his leadership has failed. Imagine how many lives might have been saved if a similar public-private initiative had been launched for testing and contact tracing at the outset; if uniform standards for infection control had been applied; or if Trump had simply modeled good behavior, like mask wearing and social distancing, from the get-go.

That Trump simultaneously accelerated both the deadliness of this pandemic and its potential cure will be one of the many enduring contradictions of his presidency. For now, the takeaway is that the American government—supporting scientists and experts, free of interference—can still do great things.

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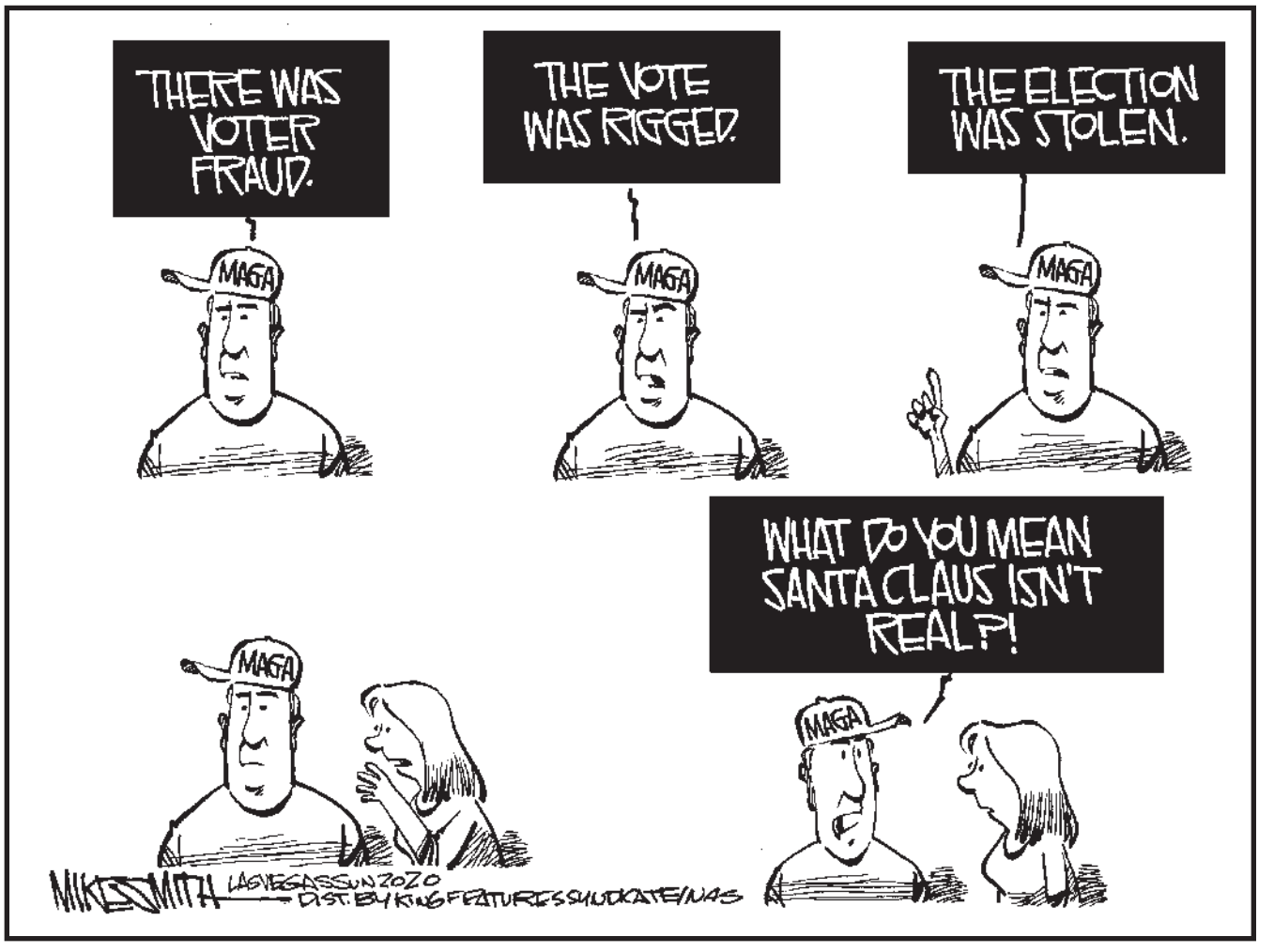
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Can Trump give his kids a get-out-of-jail-free card?

By HARRY LITMAN
Los Angeles Times

Anticipating President Donald Trump's likely end-of-term pardon spree, many commentators have suggested that given the breadth of the pardon power as set out in the Constitution, it would be lawful—if galling—for the president to issue proclamations that let his family off the hook for any and all federal offenses committed during his administration.

But it's not so simple. A stronger case can be made that Trump cannot constitutionally wipe the slate clean for his kids.

Start with a point that everyone this side of Rudy Giuliani would acknowledge. Despite the Constitution's categorical wording—it sweepingly authorizes the president to "grant Reprieves and Pardons for Offenses against the United States"—not everything goes. The pardon authority can't be construed to allow a president to commit a crime or to violate constitutional principles in exercising it. He or she couldn't decide, for instance, that only members of a particular racial group could be pardoned or begin selling reprieves to the highest bidder.

And as I and others have argued, the pardon authority also doesn't extend to self-pardon. The Department of Justice's Office of Legal Counsel determined as much in 1974, when there was concern that President Richard Nixon might try to pardon himself during the Watergate scandal. The OLC concluded that self-pardon would violate a crucial principle of Anglo-American law embedded in the Constitution—namely, that nobody may be a judge in his own cause. If it were otherwise, presidents could place themselves above the law.

This principle clearly applies to a pardon of Trump's own family as well. The contemplated pardon of Ivanka Trump, her husband, Jared Kushner, and Donald Trump Jr., whose fates are bound up in the family fortune, is at most, a slightly diluted version of the no-self-dealing principle that drove the legal counsel's opinion in 1974.

It's true that President Clinton pardoned his half brother, Roger Clinton Jr., for a drug possession and trafficking conviction—a highly controversial move at the time, and possibly improper. But the Clinton pardon was far less problematic than the contemplated Trump family pardons. Roger had served his sentence, shown remorse and returned to some semblance of a productive life.

Under Justice Department guidelines, such factors are prerequisites for a presidential pardon. Of course, Trump has routinely ignored some or all of those guidelines in granting pardons and commutations, notably for former national security advisor Michael Flynn, Arizona's Sheriff Joe Arpaio and campaign crony Roger Stone.

They reached a turning point. People share why they switched relapsing MS treatment. What will your turning point be?

The Clinton pardon raises another fundamental problem with Trump's family-and-friends approach to clemency. Pardons are designed as mercy for particular offenses. They run to crimes (Roger's drug offenses), not persons (Roger himself).

And yet, Trump's children have not been charged or found guilty of any crime against the United States. This is not a mere technical glitch. Pardon requirements such as remorse and acceptance of punishment make sense primarily in the context of specific offenses. William Blackstone, the 18th century British jurist whose commentaries on English common law inspired the founders, explains it this way: "A pardon of all felonies will not pardon a conviction." The offense "must be particularly mentioned."

In the annals of the United States, there is a famous exception to the crimes-not-persons principle—President Ford's pardon of Richard Nixon. That pardon wasn't tied to something specific. Instead it was framed to cover any crime the disgraced president might have committed in office.

Ford's act was even more controversial than the Clinton pardon, and it may have cost him the 1976 election. Some have referenced it as a potential justification for the general family pardons Trump seems to be contemplating, but it is not clear that it established a legal precedent. After all, it was never reviewed by the courts. It did at least have an important public purpose and one that clearly motivated Ford: It brought about an end, in his words, to the "long national nightmare" of Watergate.

Trump's signature characteristic as president has been his consummate indifference to public purpose. So it is with his pardons, which he deploys for private gain—a shield for his cronies, himself and possibly his children. They are a poke in the eye to the rule of law, without the pretense of achieving the broader aims that executive mercy should serve. A sound reading of the pardon power does not support blanket get-out-of-jail-free cards for the Trump kids.

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The problem with shutting restaurants

By JAY AMBROSE
Tribune News Service

Jay Ambrose is an op-ed columnist for Tribune News Service. Readers may email him at speaktojay@aol.com.

President Barack Obama wanted gun control laws. He shouted for them and didn't get them, but gun-lovers, afraid that he would, purchased firearms to the point of sales doubling. Congress wanted affordable colleges. It passed a student loan program in effect telling colleges they could recklessly raise tuition, and they did, egregiously so. Students imprudently borrowed sums they miserably struggle to repay.

The lesson is that, whatever the government wants, it may well deliver the opposite. For disbelievers, here is example three out of endless choices: Gov. Andrew Cuomo of New York shutting down restaurants to keep prospective diners from coronavirus infections they will more likely sustain at home. He ought to know as much because, back in May, he himself spoke of a survey showing two-thirds of virus patients in hospitals had become infected in their own households. He said he was shocked, though apparently not shocked enough.

The data, he said then, came from 113 hospitals, and you wonder if he has caught up with more recently reported statistics about infected New Yorkers. Something like 1.4 percent of them made the virus acquaintance in restaurants and bars, whereas 74 percent of them did so in their homes. None of this is to say that restaurants don't have their imperilments, especially minus masks or social-distancing, but gubernatorial dictates have the same imperilments and more, including 110,000 American restaurants going six feet under this year.

I don't take this lightly because a friend of mine is an immigrant who first left Iran for Turkey, Turkey for England, England for Canada, and Canada for American opportunities gone astray. He started a terrific small town coffee house, although it took years for lively crowds to provide the financial footing to feel secure about his family. Security is now missing as he struggles with governmental restrictions. The worry in his eyes is hard to forget.

Five other Democratic governors besides Cuomo have recently told restaurant owners to shut down their businesses, but Cuomo stands out because, for one thing, he recently won an Emmy award for TV acting. It had to do with his virus press conferences, and, sure enough, he was smooth, confident, proud, articulate and, when his brother on CNN interviewed him about his genius, full of laughs. His hypocritical talk is better than his wobbly walk.

What the actor did not dwell on was his initial do-nothing reaction leaving his state with more virus deaths than any other. He shrugged his shoulders about shoving people into nursing homes where they and others died as a consequence. He recently broke his own rules. He recently said he did not trust Trump to check out vaccines adequately.

At one point in the virus mishmash, Cuomo looked so good and New York was improving so much that some in the commentary business said he just might make a good vice presidential or even presidential candidate. Although that kind of talk faded, Cuomo has written a memoir about his leadership in combatting the virus. Sadly, the virus is right now pushing harder than ever, not just ruling out a Pulitzer and dimming talk about 2024, but, with Cuomo's assistance, eliminating more jobs, increasing poverty, leaving still more small businesses shed of a future and causing more residents to seek rescue in other states.

Vaccines are on the way and the worst of the pandemic may be over by the end of next year. But if state governments are going to bypass the research and creative thinking that says shutdowns should right now be a thing of the past, much that has happened to America could be around for a long, long time. Be careful but be smart, governors.

Don't put those COVID stimulus checks in the mail

By KARL W. SMITH
Bloomberg Opinion

Karl W. Smith is a Bloomberg Opinion *columnist. He was formerly vice president for federal policy at the Tax Foundation and assistant professor of economics at the University of North Carolina. He is also co-founder of the economics blog Modeled Behavior.*

With a deadline looming, stimulus talks between congressional Democrats and Republicans remain deadlocked over four issues: a liability shield for business, aid for state and local governments, stimulus checks for all Americans and a boost in unemployment compensation for workers who have lost their jobs. From a purely economic perspective, the right solution is easy: all of the above.

From a political standpoint, however, that's unrealistic. Including all four provisions would push the overall price tag to more than $1 trillion, a red line for a crucial bloc of Republican senators. Ideally, those senators would realize that the risks of doing too little right now far outweigh the risks of doing too much. The U.S. job market is already feeling the impact from the latest wave of the pandemic, and there is no sign that it's near its end.

Given the how staunchly Republicans resisted spending half of that amount—even when it had the potential save Donald Trump's presidency—odds are that they are simply unwilling to go higher. In that case, if something has to go, it should be the stimulus checks.

These checks were a hugely successful part of the CARES Act passed in March, and I strongly supported them. They were a way of buying insurance for a crisis that was still unfolding. They also bought a lot goodwill with the American public and made a real difference for tens of millions of Americans.

Nine months later, however, it's clear that most U.S. households are in solid shape. What should concern Congress are those Americans who, through no fault of their own, are unable to work amid the pandemic.

Leaving these workers without crucial support will only fuel a backlash against the lockdown measures that are necessary to minimize the effect of what is (hopefully) the last wave of the pandemic. Economically and morally, Congress's most important task is building a bridge for these workers between now and when a vaccine is widely available.

When Congress first passed enhanced benefits in March, there was (understandably) concern that many workers would earn more on unemployment than they could on the job. That, in turn, would have made it difficult for employers to rehire them if COVID faded over the summer.

Those fears turned out to be overblown for two reasons. First, while warm weather did help reduce COVID in the Northeast, increased use of air conditioning helped it spread throughout the Sun Belt. Second, the vast majority of furloughed workers were more concerned with keeping their jobs over the long term than with keeping the temporary windfall of enhanced unemployment benefits.

The data suggests that the vast majority of those unemployed workers used the those benefits to keep their current expenditures steady and add to their savings. That prudence has helped stabilize the economy—but that cushion of savings will soon run out.

When it does, those unemployed workers will be forced to cut back on spending. That reduction in spending will then make it harder for businesses trying to get back on their feet. This is the exact opposite of what the economy needs if it's going to bounce back once a vaccine is widely available.

Sending out checks is popular and, from a pure risk-management standpoint, more than worth the expense. If, however, Congress has to cut back on something to get a deal, then it should be the stimulus checks—not the expanded unemployment benefits.

Barack Obama is not my hero

By MALIK PITCHFORD
Tribune News Service

Malik Pitchford of Milwaukee is a journalist and student at DePaul University studying political science and the African and Black diaspora. This column was produced for the Progressive Media Project, which is run by The Progressive *magazine, and distributed by Tribune News Service.*

Barack Obama has spent the past several weeks months promoting his political memoir, "A Promised Land." But the former president's messaging is out of touch, tone-deaf, and indicative of his personal and class interests.

I'm Black and 20 years old. I wasn't able to vote in either of Obama's presidential elections, but I can see his appeal today. In his television, radio and online appearances, Obama exudes presidential charm, while pushing narratives of respectability. This is unlike the ideals of "hope," "change" and "progress" that he ran on in 2008.

But let's not forget how Obama chastised former NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick for the "pain" he caused others in taking a knee during the national anthem. And, more recently, the NBA rejoiced when Obama urged the Milwaukee Bucks to call off their strike protesting the Jacob Blake shooting.

Obama also showed how out-of-touch he is with young progressives in a Dec. 2 Snapchat interview. "Socialism is still a loaded term for some folks," he clucked. "We should focus on talking about getting certain things done."

The truth is that, among young American adults, socialism is as popular an ideology as free-market capitalism, according to a 2019 Gallup poll. Maybe labels and ideology aren't all that important. After all, voters in Florida—which went for Donald Trump—supported raising the state's minimum wage to $15, an issue Biden ran on.

In Obama's recent Breakfast Club appearance, host Charlamagne tha God read an excerpt from "A Promised Land." He asked if Obama felt it was still necessary, still, to soften "blunt truths" about racism in America, for white people's benefit. Obama didn't answer directly.

Instead, mentioning polling after the murder of George Floyd, Obama said, "Many more white Americans were willing to acknowledge problems in the criminal justice system based on race." He said Black people need to build "coalitions" to win votes, and, "as a consequence," must "pay attention to how other folks are feeling."

Obama has often lectured others against "snappy slogans" like "defund the police," arising in response to decades of anti-Black policing. He's told Black communities that he does not like our tone in how we call for safe communities—via divesting from policing and investing in Black communities—because it isn't marketable to others.

While polling does show that support for defunding the police is low, but polling does not accurately measure opinions on the Black Lives Matter movement's concrete goals. Regardless, calls to "defund the police" were never supposed to be a political line for Democrats to run on. Yet, Democrats increased their voter registration in light of BLM protests.

It's clear Obama and Democrats don't want to jeopardize white suburban and rural support. This year, Democrats performed better with both white men (with and without degrees), and college graduate white women, compared to 2016.

And though Democrats took white voters from Trump, it was at the expense of voters of color, including Black people. With the exception of a handful of battleground states, the Democrats underperformed in Black, Latinx, and Asian communities throughout the country.

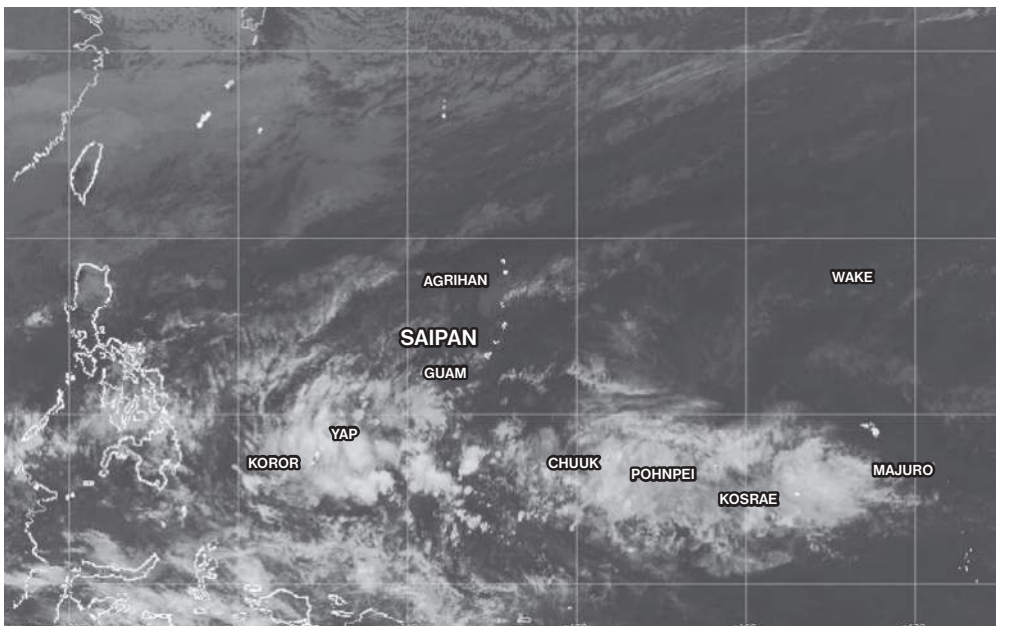
Barack Obama's book tour is just that, a book tour. Treating him as a thought leader for young people, or as the last "cool" president, is incorrect. His politics have always been that of a cautious centrist. His support for reforming broken systems, rather than the "yes we can" attitude he fostered in 2008, makes him an inspiration best left in the past.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
Partly cloudy and breezy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 25 mph.	Mostly cloudy and breezy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 25 mph.	Mostly cloudy and breezy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 25 mph.	Mostly cloudy. Isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
87° 77°	87° 77°	87° 77°	87° 77°	87° 77°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 12:58 PM, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2020

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Partly cloudy skies, isolated light showers, and moderate to fresh trade winds are present across the Marianas. At the buoys, combined seas are 5 to 7 feet.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

STOP THE SPREAD

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. continue to encourage residents within the Marianas to practice social distancing, which means avoiding close contact with people in order to avoid catching the virus yourself and to avoid passing it on to others.

- Stay home as much as possible. Avoid unnecessary travel or public places.
- Avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10.
- Choose drive-thru, take-out, or delivery options, or outdoor seating, if available, when dining in.
- Send only one healthy adult from the household run necessary errands, such as getting groceries or picking up medications. Leave children, elderly, and other vulnerable people at home as much as possible. When returning home from an errand, wash your hands before doing anything else.
- Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. People at high risk should stay at home as much as possible.
- Create a household plan of action, https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/checklisthousehold-ready.html
- Ensure a 30-day supply of all medicines.

Continue good hand hygiene

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, avoid touching your face, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.

Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if you become symptomatic

- Stay home when you are sick and if you recently traveled to a place with COVID-19. Self-quarantine means:
- ❏ Choosing a room in your house that can be used to separate sick household members from others.
- ❏ Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- ❏ Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- ❏ Limiting visitors

CHCC appreciates the patience and understanding of the community at this time. To obtain general information about the CNMI COVID-19 response, contact the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force Hotline at 287-0046, 287-0489, 287-1089. These numbers are available Monday to Sunday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For medical information about COVID-19, reach out to the COVID-19 Infoline at the following numbers: 285-1672/1352. These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For mental health support and helpful tips during a crisis, call the Mental Health Support Line at 285-1856, 323-6560, 323-6561 These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30 pm. For the 24/7 Disaster Distress Helpline, call SAMSHA at 1-800-985-5990.

For more information about DIY face coverings, visit https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html

For more information about CHCC programs, follow CHCC on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter at @cnmichcc, check out our website at www.chcc.gov.mp or call us at (670) 234-8950.

For more information on the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, visit www.governor.gov.mpand, follow @GovernorCNMI on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

This health advisory may be found online at http://www.chcc.gov.mp/pressrelease.html and at www.governor.gov.mp/covid-19.

Rumor control

During crises like this, oftentimes the spread of misinformation is just as dangerous as the virus itself. The CNMI is reminded to only share official and verified notices, press releases, and advisories from the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and CHCC.

Source: Office of the Governor

NEWS DESK For news tips, corrections and requests for news coverage, call (670) 235-NEWS (6397), 235-2440, fax 235,3740. E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com. Website:www.saipantribune.com.

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MICRONESIA	▲ ▼ °F	
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	87° / 79°
Palau	Thunderstorms	85° / 78°
Yap	Thunderstorms	87° / 80°
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	86° / 80°
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	87° / 78°
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	87° / 78°
Majuro	Thunderstorms	85° / 81°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:36 AM	5:50 PM
Friday	6:36 AM	5:50 PM
Saturday	6:37 AM	5:50 PM
Sunday	6:37 AM	5:51 PM
Monday	6:38 AM	5:51 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	8:54 AM	8:25 PM	-
Friday	9:47 AM	9:23 PM	-
Saturday	10:35 AM	10:19 PM	-
Sunday	11:18 AM	11:10 PM	-
Monday	11:56 AM	11:59 PM	-

AROUND THE GLOBE	▲ ▼ °F	
Auckland	Showers	72° / 59°
Beijing	Sunny	36° / 16°
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	64° / 57°
Honolulu	Windy	80° / 71°
London	Cloudy	46° / 43°
Los Angeles	Sunny	67° / 49°
Manila	Mostly Sunny	90° / 79°
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	90° / 68°
Miami	Sunny	66° / 54°
New York	Sunny	39° / 31°
Osaka	Showers	57° / 43°
Paris	Partly Cloudy	46° / 34°
Busan	Sunny	43° / 30°
Rome	Mostly Sunny	55° / 34°
Salem	Sunny	56° / 29°
San Francisco	Sunny	57° / 50°
Seoul	Sunny	36° / 19°
Tokyo	Rain	52° / 43°
Washington, DC	Sunny	44° / 30°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY	FEET	
3:22 AM	LOW TIDE	-0.80
10:37 AM	HIGH TIDE	1.80
4:05 PM	LOW TIDE	1.10
8:34 PM	HIGH TIDE	1.73

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF NOVEMBER 1, 2020

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	6:55am	7:35am	1, 4, 6

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

UA117/183	6:55am	9:50pm	1 via Guam

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

UA183	8:00pm	9:50pm	1, 3, 5

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	5:10am	5:51am	1, 4, 6

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA184/174	10:40pm	5:51am+1	3, 5 via Guam

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA184	10:40pm	4:30am+1	1, 3, 5

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF OCTOBER 8, 2020

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30AM	9:00AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
1302	11:00AM	11:30AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
1303	3:30PM	4:00PM	Mon/Wed/Fri

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30AM	10:00AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
3102	12:00AM	12:30AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
3103	4:30PM	5:00PM	Mon/Wed/Fri

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3401	12:15	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Temporarily Unavailable

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1201	7:00	7:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1205	11:00	11:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1206	12:00	12:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1207	13:00	13:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1208	14:00	14:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1212	18:00	18:15	Temporarily Unavailable

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
2101	7:30	7:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2105	11:30	11:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2106	12:30	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2107	13:30	13:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2108	14:30	14:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2112	18:30	18:45	Temporarily Unavailable

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SALE PRICE $6.99

SALE PRICE

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$159.99

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LS - OCEAN WORLD PLAY SET - 9907

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LS - R/C AUTO MODEL RACING CAR 15" W/LIGHT & SOUND - RC851

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LS - RC CROSS COUNTRY JUMBO MONSTER ATV W/ RIDER - ATV-3

SALE PRICE $21.99

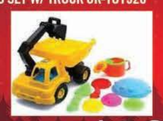
LS - RC BATTLE TANK 11" W/LIGHT & SOUND 423-3

SALE PRICE $10.99

LS - KIDS TOOL CARRIER CASE SET - 3255-A

SALE PRICE $9.99

TOY - PLASTIC BEACH TOYS SET W/ TRUCK CK-TOY320



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LS - BO RACING SET COMPETITION RACING 45PC SET 661E-1

SALE PRICE $10.99

LS - BO ROCK GUITAR 23.5" W/LIGHT & SOUND HK-90290

SALE PRICE $13.99

LS - BO CASH REGISTER PLAY SET - 5200LS

SALE PRICE $13.99

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SALE PRICE $7.99

RC TOY SHOVEL EXCAVATOR CRANE CK-TOY155

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LS - TRENDYS EN VOGUE BEAUTY DOLL PLAY SET W/BIKE - AF66B

SALE PRICE $9.99

RC TOY - BABYLAND LAMBO (Y-MB5188R)

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Business

PIC launches Winter Camp for children

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

PIC Saipan's Winter Camp encourages children to get out of their comfort zones and try new things with other children.

By BEA CABRERA
beacabrerasaipan@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

Starting Dec. 21, Pacific Islands Club Saipan will start its Winter Camp for children ages 6 to 16 years old. Winter Camp is a program that aims to promote fun and skills development among children, promote independence, teamwork, build self-esteem, and ensure continued intellectual stimulation during the Christmas break.

"PIC is delighted to present a special Winter Camp to our community. We start on the 21st and it will run for a full two weeks or parents have the option to enroll their children for two or five days," said PIC Sales & Marketing manager Katy Hung.

"Parents can rely that the Winter Program has a safe and engaging program that is an excellent source of recreation therapy for children. COVID-19 health and safety procedures are in place for all sessions," she added.

For more information and reservations, call (670) 234-7976 EXT. #2

The focus is skills development for children that will help them develop lifelong skills. "The program includes encouraging a connection with nature and surroundings, create works of art utilizing natural resources, and to enjoy physical aquatic activities in and around PIC," Hung said.

The PIC Winter Camp is a good opportunity for kids to get immersed in the joy of playing, on their own and with other kids, as well as engage in well-structured activities like specific games and projects led by PIC Clubmates," Hung added.

According to Hung, a day at Winter Camp is a full day starting at 9am. "After signing-in, we start camp at 9am where children will work on arts and crafts creation then followed by swimming and playing at the waterpark. After lunch, they can continue working on their artwork and go outdoors by playing archery, tennis and other kinds of sports games," she said.

"After playing outdoor sports, they can jump back into the pool to get cooled down. The daily camp will finish at 5pm just in time for pick-up by parents," she said.

Two-day enrolment is only $80/child or $100/child with lunch. Five-day enrolment is only $150/child or $200 with lunch. For more information and reservations, call (670) 234-7976 EXT. #2 or email:dennis.tababa@pic-saipan.com.

Biden taps Buttigieg for transportation, Granholm for energy

WASHINGTON (AP)—President-elect Joe Biden nominated his former rival Pete Buttigieg as secretary of transportation on Tuesday and intends to choose former Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm as his energy secretary.

Biden also plans to tap Gina McCarthy, a former Environmental Protection Agency chief, for the powerful new position of domestic climate chief to run his ambitious climate plans across the federal government.

All three will be central to Biden's plan to remake the country's automobiles and transportation systems to quickly cut climate-damaging petroleum emissions.

Buttigieg would be the first openly gay person confirmed by the Senate to a Cabinet post. At 38, the former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, would also add a youthful dynamic to an incoming administration that is so far dominated in large part by leaders with decades of Washington experience.

Biden said in a statement that Buttigieg was a "patriot and a problem-solver who speaks to the best of who we are as a nation."

Granholm, 61, served as Michigan's attorney general from 1999 to 2003 and two terms as Michigan's first female governor, from 2003 to 2010. She was a supporter of Biden's presidential bid and has spoken out against President Donald Trump's attempts to overturn the election results, accusing him of "poisoning democracy."

The intended selections of Granholm and McCarthy were confirmed by three people who were familiar with one or both of the picks. They spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly before the president-elect's announcement.

Biden is steadily rolling out his choices for Cabinet secretaries, having already selected former Obama adviser Tony Blinken as his secretary of state, retired Army Gen. Lloyd Austin as his secretary of defense and former Fed Chair Janet Yellen as his treasury secretary. He's also picked former Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack to reprise that role in the Biden administration, and Ohio Rep. Marcia Fudge to serve as housing secretary.

Meanwhile, New Mexico Rep. Deb Haaland is considered a lead contender to become interior secretary despite Democratic worry that her departure would leave them with a perilously thin majority in the House. Haaland, a member of New Mexico's Pueblo of Laguna, would be the first Native American to lead the Interior Department if confirmed.

Buttigieg became a leading figure in national politics when he was among those who challenged Biden for the Democratic presidential nomination this year.

TO DISINFECT AIRPORT TERMINALS IN GUAM

United now using new Clorox Electrostatic Sprayers

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

United Airlines is now using the Clorox Total 360 System to disinfect its terminal at the A.B. Won Pat International Airport Guam.

GUAM—As part of the United CleanPlus commitment to enhancing safety for travelers both onboard and at the airport, United Airlines is now using the Clorox Total 360 System to disinfect terminals at 35 of the airline's busiest airports, including the A.B. Won Pat International Airport Guam. This electrostatic spraying system is similar to the electrostatic spraying technology used onboard aircraft and will be used to spray all United areas and surfaces at the airport terminal, employee spaces, the United Hangar, and the Guam City Ticket Office.

The disinfecting solution is EPA-approved to kill SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Through its United CleanPlus program, United has been working closely with Clorox and the Cleveland Clinic since early May to consult on all its cleaning and disinfection protocols. The airline currently uses Clorox Disinfection Wipes on all mainline aircraft and in United Club locations.

"At the beginning of this pandemic, we laid out our United CleanPlus commitment of putting health and safety at the forefront of the travel experience," said Mike Hanna, senior vice president of airport operations at United. "In teaming up with Clorox, we've worked with their experts to enhance our cleaning procedures and roll out state-of-the-art products throughout the United journey to give our greater customers confidence when they travel. This is just one of many steps we are taking as part of our layered approach to safety."

"Throughout the pandemic, we've worked with United to help enhance the safety of their travelers with disinfecting protocols and products, as part of United's holistic approach to traveler safety," said Heath Rigsby, vice president of out of home for The Clorox Company. "We're proud to extend these efforts to help passengers even before boarding their planes by using our Total 360 System to disinfect surfaces within busy airport settings."

The Clorox Total 360 System charges and atomizes the Clorox disinfecting solutions to deliver a powerful flow of charged particles that attract to surfaces with a force stronger than gravity. This allows the product to reach and uniformly coat germ-prone surfaces, including areas that conventional trigger sprays may easily miss.

United implemented its Guam program on Dec. 1 and expects all 35 airports will be using the systems daily by early December and plans to expand to additional airports in early 2021.

Sam Shinohara, managing director of airport operations for Asia/Pacific at United, added, "Implementing this program in Guam is another measure United is taking to support the island's fight against COVID-19. We are proud to be one of 35 airports in our system to be offering this added layer of protection for our customers, employees, and visitor industry partners. Keeping everyone safe and feeling confident throughout their United journey and Guam travel experience is our top priority."

Using Clorox products is only one of the ways United is working to enhance customer safety in its airports. The carrier is also providing antimicrobial gloves to Ramp and Baggage Service employees to offer an additional protection layer against SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Every ramp and baggage service employee will receive a pair of washable, reusable gloves that are effective for up to six months. Additional measures United has taken since the start of the pandemic to create a safer environment in its airports include:

■ In April:

❖ United began installing hand sanitizer stations throughout terminals and plexiglass dividers at service areas. The airline also started placing signage around the airports to inform customers of safety measures that are in place.

■ In May:

❖ United was the first U.S. carrier to introduce touchless check-in kiosks that allow customers to check-in, including if they are checking bags, without touching anything besides their own mobile device.

■ In June:

❖ United became the first U.S. airline to require customers to take a health self-assessment during the check-in process.

■ In July:

❖ United expanded its policy requiring all customers wear masks onboard to in its terminals and stated that customers who refused to comply with this policy may be placed on an internal travel restriction list while the policy is in place.

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Business

PIC launches Winter Camp for children

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

PIC Saipan's Winter Camp encourages children to get out of their comfort zones and try new things with other children.

By BEA CABRERA
beacabrerasaipan@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

Starting Dec. 21, Pacific Islands Club Saipan will start its Winter Camp for children ages 6 to 16 years old. Winter Camp is a program that aims to promote fun and skills development among children, promote independence, teamwork, build self-esteem, and ensure continued intellectual stimulation during the Christmas break.

"PIC is delighted to present a special Winter Camp to our community. We start on the 21st and it will run for a full two weeks or parents have the option to enroll their children for two or five days," said PIC Sales & Marketing manager Katy Hung.

"Parents can rely that the Winter Program has a safe and engaging program that is an excellent source of recreation therapy for children. COVID-19 health and safety procedures are in place for all sessions," she added.

The focus is skills development for children that will help them develop lifelong skills. "The program includes encouraging a connection with nature and surroundings, create works of art utilizing natural resources, and to enjoy physical aquatic activities in and around PIC," Hung said.

For more information and reservations, call (670) 234-7976 EXT. #2

The PIC Winter Camp is a good opportunity for kids to get immersed in the joy of playing, on their own and with other kids, as well as engage in well-structured activities like specific games and projects led by PIC Clubmates," Hung added.

According to Hung, a day at Winter Camp is a full day starting at 9am. "After signing-in, we start camp at 9am where children will work on arts and crafts creation then followed by swimming and playing at the waterpark. After lunch, they can continue working on their artwork and go outdoors by playing archery, tennis and other kinds of sports games," she said.

"After playing outdoor sports, they can jump back into the pool to get cooled down. The daily camp will finish at 5pm just in time for pick-up by parents," she said.

Two-day enrolment is only $80/child or $100/child with lunch. Five-day enrolment is only $150/child or $200 with lunch. For more information and reservations, call (670) 234-7976 EXT. #2 or email:dennis.tababa@pic-saipan.com.

Biden taps Buttigieg for transportation, Granholm for energy

WASHINGTON (AP)— President-elect Joe Biden nominated his former rival Pete Buttigieg as secretary of transportation on Tuesday and intends to choose former Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm as his energy secretary.

Biden also plans to tap Gina McCarthy, a former Environmental Protection Agency chief, for the powerful new position of domestic climate chief to run his ambitious climate plans across the federal government.

All three will be central to Biden's plan to remake the country's automobiles and transportation systems to quickly cut climate-damaging petroleum emissions.

Buttigieg would be the first openly gay person confirmed by the Senate to a Cabinet post. At 38, the former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, would also add a youthful dynamic to an incoming administration that is so far dominated in large part by leaders with decades of Washington experience.

Biden said in a statement that Buttigieg was a "patriot and a problem-solver who speaks to the best of who we are as a nation."

Granholm, 61, served as Michigan's attorney general from 1999 to 2003 and two terms as Michigan's first female governor, from 2003 to 2010. She was a supporter of Biden's presidential bid and has spoken out against President Donald Trump's attempts to overturn the election results, accusing him of "poisoning democracy."

The intended selections of Granholm and McCarthy were confirmed by three people who were familiar with one or both of the picks. They spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly before the president-elect's announcement.

Biden is steadily rolling out his choices for Cabinet secretaries, having already selected former Obama adviser Tony Blinken as his secretary of state, retired Army Gen. Lloyd Austin as his secretary of defense and former Fed Chair Janet Yellen as his treasury secretary. He's also picked former Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack to reprise that role in the Biden administration, and Ohio Rep. Marcia Fudge to serve as housing secretary.

Meanwhile, New Mexico Rep. Deb Haaland is considered a lead contender to become interior secretary despite Democratic worry that her departure would leave them with a perilously thin majority in the House. Haaland, a member of New Mexico's Pueblo of Laguna, would be the first Native American to lead the Interior Department if confirmed.

Buttigieg became a leading figure in national politics when he was among those who challenged Biden for the Democratic presidential nomination this year.

TO DISINFECT AIRPORT TERMINALS IN GUAM

United now using new Clorox Electrostatic Sprayers

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

United Airlines is now using the Clorox Total 360 System to disinfect its terminal at the A.B. Won Pat International Airport Guam.

GUAM—As part of the United CleanPlus commitment to enhancing safety for travelers both onboard and at the airport, United Airlines is now using the Clorox Total 360 System to disinfect terminals at 35 of the airline's busiest airports, including the A.B. Won Pat International Airport Guam. This electrostatic spraying system is similar to the electrostatic spraying technology used onboard aircraft and will be used to spray all United areas and surfaces at the airport terminal, employee spaces, the United Hangar, and the Guam City Ticket Office.

The disinfecting solution is EPA-approved to kill SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Through its United CleanPlus program, United has been working closely with Clorox and the Cleveland Clinic since early May to consult on all its cleaning and disinfection protocols. The airline currently uses Clorox Disinfection Wipes on all mainline aircraft and in United Club locations.

"At the beginning of this pandemic, we laid out our United CleanPlus commitment of putting health and safety at the forefront of the travel experience," said Mike Hanna, senior vice president of airport operations at United. "In teaming up with Clorox, we've worked with their experts to enhance our cleaning procedures and roll out state-of-the-art products throughout the United journey to give our greater customers confidence when they travel. This is just one of many steps we are taking as part of our layered approach to safety."

"Throughout the pandemic, we've worked with United to help enhance the safety of their travelers with disinfecting protocols and products, as part of United's holistic approach to traveler safety," said Heath Rigsby, vice president of out of home for The Clorox Company. "We're proud to extend these efforts to help passengers even before boarding their planes by using our Total 360 System to disinfect surfaces within busy airport settings."

The Clorox Total 360 System charges and atomizes the Clorox disinfecting solutions to deliver a powerful flow of charged particles that attract to surfaces with a force stronger than gravity. This allows the product to reach and uniformly coat germ-prone surfaces, including areas that conventional trigger sprays may easily miss.

United implemented its Guam program on Dec. 1 and expects all 35 airports will be using the systems daily by early December and plans to expand to additional airports in early 2021.

Sam Shinohara, managing director of airport operations for Asia/Pacific at United, added, "Implementing this program in Guam is another measure United is taking to support the island's fight against COVID-19. We are proud to be one of 35 airports in our system to be offering this added layer of protection for our customers, employees, and visitor industry partners. Keeping everyone safe and feeling confident throughout their United journey and Guam travel experience is our top priority."

Using Clorox products is only one of the ways United is working to enhance customer safety in its airports. The carrier is also providing antimicrobial gloves to Ramp and Baggage Service employees to offer an additional protection layer against SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Every ramp and baggage service employee will receive a pair of washable, reusable gloves that are effective for up to six months. Additional measures United has taken since the start of the pandemic to create a safer environment in its airports include:

■ In April:

❖ United began installing hand sanitizer stations throughout terminals and plexiglass dividers at service areas. The airline also started placing signage around the airports to inform customers of safety measures that are in place.

■ In May:

❖ United was the first U.S. carrier to introduce touchless check-in kiosks that allow customers to check-in, including if they are checking bags, without touching anything besides their own mobile device.

■ In June:

❖ United became the first U.S. airline to require customers to take a health self-assessment during the check-in process.

■ In July:

❖ United expanded its policy requiring all customers wear masks onboard to in its terminals and stated that customers who refused to comply with this policy may be placed on an internal travel restriction list while the policy is in place.

❖ United began automated text notifications to customers waiting on seat assignments, reducing touchpoints between customers and employees.

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Nation

US vaccinations ramp up as 2nd COVID-19 shot nears

WASHINGTON (AP)—Hundreds more hospitals around the country began dispensing COVID-19 shots to their workers in a rapid expansion of the U.S. vaccination drive Tuesday, while a second vaccine moved to the cusp of government authorization.

A day after the rollout of Pfizer-BioNTech's coronavirus shots, the Food and Drug Administration said its preliminary analysis confirmed the effectiveness and safety of the vaccine developed by Moderna and the National Institutes of Health. A panel of outside experts is expected to recommend the formula on Thursday, with the FDA's green light coming soon thereafter.

The Moderna vaccine uses the same technology as Pfizer-BioNTech's and showed similarly strong protection against COVID-19 but is easier to handle because it does not need to be kept in the deep freeze at minus 94 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 70 Celsius).

Another weapon against the outbreak can't come soon enough: The number of dead in the U.S. passed a staggering 300,000 on Monday, according to Johns Hopkins University, with about 2,400 people now dying per day on average.

The devastating toll is only expected to grow in the coming weeks, fueled by travel over Christmas and New Year's, family gatherings and lax adherence to mask-wearing and other precautions.

Packed in dry ice, shipments of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine began arriving Tuesday at more than 400 additional hospitals and other distribution sites.

The first 3 million shots are being strictly rationed to front-line health workers and nursing home patients, with hundreds of millions more shots needed over the coming months to protect most Americans.

The rollout provided a measure of encouragement to exhausted doctors, nurses and other hospital staffers around the country.

Maritza Beniquez has had a front-row seat to the devastation the COVID-19 pandemic has wrought on communities of color in New Jersey, so she jumped at the chance to take the vaccine that is being hailed as a turning point in the long and grueling battle against the virus.

The 56-year-old emergency room nurse at Newark's University Hospital became the first person in New Jersey to receive the vaccine on Tuesday. All recipients will get a second shot a few weeks later.

"I'm happy that in another month and a half I won't have to be afraid to go into a room anymore. I won't have to be afraid to perform chest compressions or be present when they're intubating a patient," Beniquez said. "I don't want to be afraid anymore, and I don't want to have that risk of taking it home to my own family and my own friends."

Widespread acceptance of the vaccine is critical to eventually protecting enough of the U.S. population to defeat the outbreak. But just half of Americans say they want to get vaccinated, while about a quarter don't and the rest are unsure, according to a recent poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Health Research.

In Manchester, New Hampshire, intensive care unit nurse Heidi Kukla said she volunteered to get the shot first to help dispel fears about the vaccine's long-term effects and the speed with which it was developed.

Biden tells Georgia he needs a Democratic Senate to govern

ATLANTA (AP)—President-elect Joe Biden told Georgia voters on Tuesday they must deliver two Democratic Senate runoffs victories in January so his administration can forcefully confront the coronavirus pandemic and other national challenges.

Fresh off the Electoral College affirming his victory, Biden campaigned alongside Jon Ossoff and the Rev. Raphael Warnock as they try to unseat Republican Sens. David Perdue and Kelly Loeffler in Jan. 5 runoff elections that will determine which party controls the Senate. The president-elect, who won Georgia in November, warned that Republican victories would leave him to face the kind of GOP obstruction that hampered former President Barack Obama for most of his two terms.

"We can get so much done, so much that can make the lives of the people of Georgia and the whole country so much better," Biden said at a drive-in rally outside downtown Atlanta on the second day of early voting. "And we need senators who are willing to do it, for God's sake."

Biden criticized Perdue and Loeffler as "roadblocks" for not supporting a sweeping new economic aid package as the coronavirus pandemic surges. In contrast, he said Ossoff and Warnock would "fight for progress and not just get in the way."

"Are you ready to vote for two United States senators who know how to say the word 'yes' and not just 'no'?" Biden said as supporters gathered in the railroad yard honked their horns.

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The vehicle will be sold to the highest bidder "as is, where is" without any warranties – Minimum bid is $4,000.00
Inspection and a vehicle bid form can be obtained from Bank of Guam counsel's office at:

ROBERT TENORIO TORRES
Attorney at Law
Chalan Kiya
P.O. Box 503758 CK, Saipan, MP 96950

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director

REQUEST FOR A&E SERVICES
CUC-RAES-21-012

Engineering Consulting Services for CUC's Integrated Solar Photovoltaic Energy and Battery Storage Systems

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed RAES Proposals from qualified firms for engineering consultant services for CUC's solar photovoltaic and renewable energy systems in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The award of this project is under the Department of the Interior Office of Insular Affairs.

The RAES package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $100.00 for one RAES package set.

One (1) original and five (5) hard copies of the AES Proposal marked *"CUC-RAES-21-012, Engineering Consulting Services for CUC's Integrated Solar Photovoltaic Energy and Battery Storage Systems"*, to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than December 30, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. (ChST)**. Late submissions and conditional offers will not be considered.

Discussions may be conducted with responsible proposers who submit RAES Proposal determined to be reasonably susceptible of being selected for award for the purpose of clarification and to ensure full understanding of and responsiveness to solicitation requirements. All proposers shall be accorded fair and equal treatment with respect to any opportunity for discussion. During discussions, there will be no disclosure of any information derived from the RAES Proposal submitted by competing proposers.

All proposers are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the proposer due to lack of information or understanding of the RAES requirements in the course of proposer's preparation of the RAES under the contract. The RAES does not commit CUC to award a contract, to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of the RAES under this request, or to procure or contract for services. Proposers are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This RAES and the ensuing contract shall be executed as per the CUC Procurement Regulations.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered prospective proposers and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on December 15, 2020** to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Anne Crockett, CUC Senior Electrical Engineer via email address anne.crocket@cucgov.org and Christie L. Sablan, Administrative Technician Senior, via email christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all RAES Proposals for any reason and to waive any defects in said RAES, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All RAES Proposals shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY BOYER SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
CUC-RFP-21-009

Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) for Power Plant No.1, Lower Base, Saipan

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC), is soliciting competitive sealed proposals from qualified and experienced entities for a turn-key design and implementation of two SCADA systems and two additives at Power Plant No.1, Lower Base, Saipan, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands.

The award of this project is under the Department of the Interior Office of Insular Affairs.

The RFP Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $100.00 for one package.

One (1) original and five (5) hard copies of your submission must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked ***"CUC-RFP-21-009, Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) System for Power Plant No.1, Lower Base, Saipan"*** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **January 5, 2021.** Late submissions and conditional offers will not be considered.

Discussions may be conducted with responsible offerors who submit proposals determined to be reasonably susceptible of being selected for award for the purpose of clarification and to ensure full understanding of and responsiveness to solicitation requirements. All proposers shall be accorded fair and equal treatment with respect to any opportunity to discussion. During discussions, there will be no disclosure of any information derived from proposals submitted by competing proposers.

All Proposers are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the Proposer due to lack of information or understanding of the proposal requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a proposal or supply under the contract. The RFP does not commit CUC to award a contract, to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of the proposal under this request, or to procure or contract for services. The Proposers are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed as per the CUC Procurement Regulations.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered prospective proposers and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on December 22, 2020** to Manny Sablan, CUC's Purchasing Administrator via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Richard Cano, CUC's Power Generation Manager via email richard.cano@cucgov.org and Christie L. Sablan, CUC's Senior Administrative Technician via email address christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all proposals for any reason and to waive any defects in said proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All proposals shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY BOYER SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Asia

S. Korea reports new daily high, mulls new steps

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—South Korea has reported another high in daily coronavirus increases as health officials face growing pressure to enforce stricter social distancing to slow the spread in the capital area.

The 1,078 cases confirmed by the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency on Wednesday brought the national caseload to 45,442. The death toll was 612 after 25 COVID-19 patients died in the past 48 hours, the two deadliest days since the outbreak began.

The agency said 226 among 11,883 active patients were in serious or critical condition, which was also the most since the start of the pandemic, as fears grow about a possible shortage in hospital capacities.

Senior Health Ministry official Yoon Taeho said authorities were discussing whether to elevate social distancing restrictions to the highest "Tier 3," which could possibly including banning gatherings of more than 10 people, shutting nonessential businesses, and requiring companies to have more employees work from home.

"Tier-3 social distancing is the last and strongest measure that we could take, which would cause widespread damage to the self-employed," he said. "We are hearing the opinions of experts, including those from central government agencies and regional governments ... while deeply reviewing whether to elevate the measures."

More than 770 of the new infections were reported from the Seoul metropolitan area, home to half of the country's 51 million people, where new clusters are popping up from just about everywhere, including churches, hospitals, long-term care facilities, schools, restaurants, army units and prisons.

Infections were also reported in other major cities, including Busan, Daejeon, Ulsan and Daegu.

Critics say the country let its guard down by easing social distancing to the lowest in October out of concerns about sluggish economic growth rates despite warnings of a viral surge during the winter, when people spend longer hours indoors.

The government restored some restrictions over the past weeks, such as shutting down nightclubs, halting in-person school classes and requiring restaurants to provide only deliveries and takeouts after 9 p.m.

AP

A medical worker wearing protective gear takes sample from a woman during a COVID-19 testing at a coronavirus testing site in Seoul, South Korea, Tuesday, Dec. 15, 2020.

Maldives considers burying Sri Lankan Muslims

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP)—The Maldives president's office says it is discussing how to provide a "humane response" to a request from neighboring Sri Lanka to allow burials for Muslims who die of COVID-19.

Presidential spokesman Ibrahim Hood said Tuesday that President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih has received a request from Sri Lanka to look into the possibility of allowing such burials.

"The request has been received. At present we are considering and discussions are ongoing with regard to what would be the appropriate and humane response," Hood told The Associated Press.

There was no immediate confirmation from Sri Lanka of such a request.

Sri Lanka's government in March announced it will cremate the bodies of all people who die of COVID-19, saying the coronavirus could contaminate underground water.

Sri Lankan Muslims have urged the government to allow burials, citing their religious beliefs. They accuse the government of denying Muslims a basic right without scientific grounds, since many countries in the world allow burials.

Sri Lanka's confirmed cases since March reached 33,477 on Tuesday, including 154 fatalities.

In other developments in the Asia-Pacific region:

■ Authorities in Sri Lanka said on Tuesday that more than 3,000 COVID-19 cases have been detected in the country's highly congested prisons, as infections also surge in the capital and its suburbs. They said that 2,984 inmates and 103 guards have been confirmed to have the disease in seven prisons around the country. Sri Lankan prisons are highly congested, with more than 26,000 inmates crowded in facilities with a capacity of 10,000. Eleven inmates were killed in pandemic-related riots inside a prison early this month. Unrest has been growing, with prisoners demanding better facilities and care as COVID-19 cases increase. Inmates have staged several protests inside prisons in recent weeks.

■ Taiwan has set a goal to vaccinate 60% of its population with a COVID-19 vaccine, or 15 million people, a health official said Tuesday. Taiwan has signed an agreement with COVAX to purchase a COVID-19 vaccine, but is also actively in talks with vaccine companies who have candidates in phase 3 trials for a potential bilateral agreement as well, said Jing-Hui Yang, a deputy director at the Central Epidemic Command Center. COVAX, a global plan to distribute vaccines equally, has not yet started sending out shipments of vaccines. The island will prioritize frontline health workers and essential personnel to receive the vaccine first, Yang said. Later on, the immunization campaign will target the elderly as well as those who have existing chronic illnesses. Officials expect the vaccines to arrive early next year. Still, an immunization campaign will take time, and will not be finished in just a month or two, Yang warned.

■ South Korea has reported another 880 new cases of the coronavirus as it slips deeper into its worst wave of the pandemic yet. That brought the country's confirmed cases to 44,364 on Tuesday, and was the 38th consecutive day of triple-digit daily increases. More than 10,000 infections have been reported in the last 15 days alone, mostly from the densely populated Seoul metropolitan area where health workers are struggling to stem transmissions tied to hospitals, long-term care facilities, restaurants, churches and schools. The death toll was at 600 after 13 COVID-19 patients died in the past 24 hours. The Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency said 205 among 11,205 active patients were in serious or critical condition as fears grow over possible shortages of intensive-care units. Critics say the country's viral resurgence underscores the risk of encouraging economic activity when vaccines are at least months away. The government had lowered social distancing restrictions to the lowest tier in October out of concerns about sluggish economic growth rates despite warnings of a viral surge during the winter, when people spend longer hours indoors. The government restored some restrictions over the past weeks.

Japan 'Twitter killer' sentenced to death for serial murders

TOKYO (AP)—A Japanese court on Tuesday sentenced a man to death for killing and dismembering nine people, most of whom had posted suicidal thoughts on social media, in a case that shocked the country.

The Tachikawa branch of the Tokyo District Court found Takahiro Shiraishi, known as the "Twitter killer," guilty of killing, dismembering and storing the bodies of the victims in his apartment in Zama, near Tokyo.

Shiraishi, 30, pleaded guilty and said he would not appeal his death sentence.

Police arrested Shiraishi in 2017 after finding the bodies of eight females and one male in cold-storage cases in his apartment.

Investigators said Shiraishi approached the victims via Twitter, offering to assist them with their suicidal wishes. He killed the women, including teenagers, after raping them, and also killed a boyfriend of one of the women to silence him, investigators said.

On Twitter, Shiraishi used the name "Hangman," promising to help his victims die and inviting them to his apartment.

Although his defense lawyers argued that he assisted the victims' suicidal wishes, Shiraishi later said he killed them without their consent.

In the ruling, presiding Judge Naokuni Yano said none of the victims agreed to be killed and that Shiraishi was fully responsible for their deaths, according to media reports.

He said the crime was extremely heinous and had caused fear and concern in a society where social media have become an indispensable part of everyday life, NHK public television reported.

Japan's suicide rate ranks among the world's highest. Following a recent decline, the number has climbed back this year as people were hit by the effects of the pandemic.

Japan's crime rate is relatively low, but it has experienced some recent high-profile killings. In July 2016, a former employee of a home for the disabled allegedly killed 19 residents and injured more than 20 others.

World

Poor countries face long wait for vaccines despite promises

AP
Volunteers wait to be checked at a vaccine trial facility for AstraZeneca at Soweto's Chris Sani Baragwanath Hospital outside Johannesburg, South Africa, Monday Nov. 30, 2020.

NEW DELHI (AP)—With Americans, Britons and Canadians rolling up their sleeves to receive coronavirus vaccines, the route out of the pandemic now seems clear to many in the West, even if the rollout will take many months. But for poorer countries, the road will be far longer and rougher.

The ambitious initiative known as COVAX created to ensure the entire world has access to COVID-19 vaccines has secured only a fraction of the 2 billion doses it hopes to buy over the next year, has yet to confirm any actual deals to ship out vaccines and is short on cash.

The virus that has killed more than 1.6 million people has exposed vast inequities between countries, as fragile health systems and smaller economies were often hit harder. COVAX was set up by the World Health Organization, vaccines alliance GAVI and CEPI, a global coalition to fight epidemics, to avoid the international stampede for vaccines that has accompanied past outbreaks and would reinforce those imbalances.

But now some experts say the chances that coronavirus shots will be shared fairly between rich nations and the rest are fading fast. With vaccine supplies currently limited, developed countries, some of which helped fund the research with taxpayer money, are under tremendous pressure to protect their own populations and are buying up shots.

Meanwhile, some poorer countries that signed up to the initiative are looking for alternatives because of fears it won't deliver.

"It's simple math," said Arnaud Bernaert, head of global health at the World Economic Forum. Of the approximately 12 billion doses the pharmaceutical industry is expected to produce next year, about 9 billion shots have already been reserved by rich countries. "COVAX has not secured enough doses, and the way the situation may unfold is they will probably only get these doses fairly late."

To date, COVAX's only confirmed, legally binding agreement is for up to 200 million doses, though that includes an option to order several times that number of additional doses, GAVI spokesman James Fulker said. It has agreements for another 500 million vaccines, but those are not legally binding.

The 200 million doses will come from the Serum Institute of India, the company that will likely make a large portion of the coronavirus shots destined for the developing world. CEO Adar Poonawalla says it has a confirmed order for 100 million doses each of a vaccine developed by Oxford University and AstraZeneca and one from Novovax.

"We don't have anything beyond that in writing," he told The Associated Press. "If they want more, they'll have to place more orders."

He said the lack of commitment from COVAX will mean a much longer wait for people in developing countries. Poonawalla also noted that his company's first priority would be making shots for India, which has suggested it wants at least 300 million vaccines. It's likely India would not be able to take all of those at once, but a big order could delay the distribution of vaccines for other parts of the developing world, Poonawalla said.

Asked on Tuesday about why the Serum Institute was only contracted to produce 200 million vaccines for COVAX, WHO's Dr. Bruce Aylward said they would go back to the company "to make sure they have the assurances they need." He said the Serum Institute was "absolutely crucial to the supply of many vaccines."

Potentially further slowing down the process is that neither the AstraZeneca vaccine nor the Novovax one has been licensed by any regulatory agency yet—and any injection distributed by COVAX will likely need WHO approval. COVAX does not have any supplies of the two vaccines that appear to be most effective so far—the Pfizer-BioNTech shot and the Moderna one. The United Kingdom has already begun giving the Pfizer vaccine, and the United States and Canada are rolling it out this week. Some Gulf countries have also authorized it.

Still, GAVI said they "aim to start rolling out safe and effective vaccines to COVAX (member countries) at scale within the first and second quarters of the New Year."

Even with vaccines in hand, the rollouts will take many months in rich countries, and many developing ones are facing serious logistical challenges that will add to delays, noted Dr. Gagandeep Kang, an infectious diseases expert at the Christian Medical College at Vellore in southern India.

Senior officials at the WHO have acknowledged privately that attempts to fairly allocate vaccine through the initiative are flawed, despite publicly lauding its success.

UK urged to ax 'rash' easing of restrictions over Christmas

LONDON (AP)—The four nations of the United Kingdom faced mounting calls Tuesday to scrap. or at least limit, a planned easing of coronavirus restrictions over Christmas following a spike in new infections.

Talks between leaders from across the U.K. over the planned easing are set to resume on Wednesday, a day that will see London and some surrounding areas join other parts of Britain in facing much more stringent restrictions.

Michael Gove, one of the most senior members in the British government, which sets public health policy for England, held talks Tuesday with leaders from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Though no change of plan was announced, further discussions are set to take place on Wednesday.

The pressure on them to ditch the scheduled five-day easing—which would allow three households to form a so-called bubble in and out of the home—ratcheted higher through the day, with concerns voiced from across the political spectrum.

Perhaps loudest was a joint editorial from two of the country's leading medical journals. In only their second joint editorial in their more than 100-year histories, the British Medical Journal and the Health Service Journal urged a rethink of a "rash" decision that they said will "cost many lives."

"We are publishing it because we believe the government is about to blunder into another major error," they said.

Britain's Conservative government, along with the devolved administrations, agreed last month to allow a maximum of three households to mix between Dec. 23 and Dec. 27, regardless of what local restrictions are in place.

But with new infections rising in many parts of the country, there are growing concerns that the government's Christmas relaxation will see a further escalation in infections and deaths and put too much pressure on the already-stressed National Health Service.

Keir Starmer, leader of the opposition Labour Party, was one who called on Prime Minister Boris Johnson to call an emergency meeting to review the decision.

"I understand that people want to spend time with their families after this awful year, but the situation has clearly taken a turn for the worse since the decision about Christmas was taken," he said.

Any potential easing over Christmas contrasts with measures being taken by other European nations such as Germany and the Netherlands, which have announced sweeping new restrictions for the holidays.

When the Christmas easing was first announced last month, Johnson was careful to stress that households should be "jolly careful, especially with elderly relatives."

Boko Haram claims abduction of students in northern Nigeria

LAGOS, Nigeria (AP)—Rebels from the Boko Haram extremist group claimed responsibility Tuesday for abducting hundreds of boys from a school in Nigeria's northern Katsina State last week in one of the largest such attacks in years, raising fears of a growing wave of violence in the region.

More than 330 students remain missing from the Government Science Secondary School in Kankara after gunmen with assault rifles attacked their school Friday night, although scores of others managed to escape.

The government and the attackers are negotiating the fate of the boys, according to Garba Shehu, a spokesman for Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari.

"The kidnappers had made contact and discussions were already on, pertaining to the safety and return" of the children to their homes, said Shehu on Twitter during talks with Katsina Gov. Aminu Masari. Neither official said whether the negotiations are with Boko Haram or another group.

Masari said security agencies "deployed for rescue operations have also informed us that they have located their position."

The Daily Nigerian said it received an audio message from Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau claiming the abduction, although there has been no independent verification of its authenticity.

The Islamic extremist group has carried out mass abduction of students before. The most serious took place in April 2014, when more than 270 schoolgirls were taken from their dormitory at the Government Secondary School in Chibok in northeastern Borno State. About 100 of the girls are still missing.

In February 2014, 59 boys were killed during a Boko Haram attack on the Federal Government College Buni Yadi in Yobe State.

In the audio message about Friday's attack, Shekau said his group abducted the schoolboys because Western education is against the tenets of Islam.

More than 600 students attend the school. Many were able to escape during a gunfight between the attackers and the police, according to state police spokesman Gambo Isah.

Students corroborated this account with various news agencies, saying many of them were also rounded up and forced to walk to a nearby forest, where some were also able to flee.

Environment

HENRY FANDEL OF THE MARIANA CROW RECOVERY PROJECT
The Mariana crow, or åga in Chamorro, has declined over 80% since the 1980s. Now only found on Rota, the community is working to bring back its population, through the Mariana Crow Recovery Project.

TO SAVE THE MARIANA CROW:

Working with the community to bring back the åga

By IVA MAURIN
iva_maurin@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The island of Rota has the distinction of being the only place on earth where the åga now can be found in the wild. More known as the Mariana Crow, the åga is a strong, resilient member of the genus Corvus, a family of birds which includes crows, ravens, jackdaws, and rooks.

The oldest known åga lived for at least 18 years. It is a territorial bird—fervently defending its nesting area from intruders by calling loudly, hammering its bill on branches, and even by breaking branches and tearing leaves off trees.

And, like the åga, a team of researchers, of the Mariana Crow Recovery Project, a research program administered by Dr. Renee Ha and Dr. Sarah Faegre from the University of Washington, is also passionately working to bring back the population of these extremely intelligent birds.

"The åga has been on Rota for more than two million years," project crew leader Henry Fandel said. "It is well understood that adding or removing members from an ecological community can disrupt a balance that threatens the community or makes it more susceptible to disturbance."

Fandel is one of 10 researchers who are on the island now, to document the trend of the åga population since 2005, to study factors contributing to the decline of the bird, to release to the wild captive-reared birds, and to conduct continuous outreach in the community and schools in Rota to ensure the success of the recovery project.

"Islands, especially small islands with their small populations, are known for hosting ecosystems that are especially prone to disturbance. Maintaining biodiversity and recovering endangered populations that are longtime members of Rota's ecological community gives the local ecosystem it's best chance at stability."

"This is good for the ecosystem itself, but more importantly, it's good for the people who depend on it."

While, according to Fandel, they have never had a chance to officially study the ways the åga benefit Rota's ecosystem, based on the bird's diet and behavior, a strong åga population provides significant top-down predator control of prey communities such as insects, spiders, and lizards, as well as in seed dispersal for åhgao, fagot, and tålisai trees.

Wiping out the 'Kill the Bird' stigma

"On Rota, [for] an individual [age] 40 and above, when you say 'Kill the Bird,' they know that it pertains to åga," shared Cris Ogo, Indigenous Affairs Office program manager, in an interview with *Saipan Tribune*.

Ogo had a chance to go to Rota recently to conduct a forum discussing the establishment of a National Park Service unit on the island, where he met both Fandel and Faegre. Ogo, at the time, requested that the researchers present their study before the Rota Mayor's Office, the municipal council, and dignitaries to promote a better understanding of their goal to save the bird.

According to Ogo, in the late '90s when agricultural land permits were issued on Rota, some land permittees were told that they cannot enter the property due to encroachment of the åga habitat, where the people opposed the restriction.

The stigma still carries until today, he added, and stressed that this is why there is a need to conduct an extensive educational outreach on why the åga must be protected..

"For me and after visiting the åga holding pen, the hatchery and listening to Dr. Sarah's presentation. I understood the need to protect the population of this endangered species. This process of touring the facilities and listening to the 45-minute presentation will definitely lower the stigma of 'Kill the Bird.'"

"The community of Rota needs more information about the need of protecting endangered species. I think there is not enough educational awareness on this subject. Educational awareness is the missing link to better understand the åga project."

Ogo stressed that the decline of the åga population on Rota needs to be observed to prevent further decline of the species, especially with Rota being the only island now where the bird species can be found in the wild.

The community can help

"One of the things we look forward to the most is continuing to strengthen the bonds between our research project and the community of Rota," Fandel shared.

Throughout the project, the researchers have been working closely with, and are thankful to land owners who have given them permission to pass through their land, to get to the deeper parts of the forests where the birds can be found.

While the pandemic has affected the education and outreach initiatives regarding the åga, with visits to schools or classrooms not as easy to set up as it has been in the past, the Mariana Crow Recovery Project team has been figuring out creative ways on how they can be of service to the community.

In addition, they also welcome all aspiring wildlife biologists from the CNMI and Guam to apply for open positions on their project, which they are looking to fill between March and June 2021.

The researchers are slated to release 13 additional birds out to the wild around this time, on top of the 23 that they have already released since 2018—a serious accomplishment indeed to combat the decline, and help rebuild the åga population.

With the forest and the wildlife populations on Rota extremely valuable to the community, truly, as Fandel stressed, it is very important work to maintain the integrity of Rota's ecosystem.

To get updates on the Åga Project, visit the Mariana Crow Recovery Project page on facebook (https://www.facebook.com/MarianaCrowRecoveryProject/).

Life & Style

AP Breakthrough Entertainer Anya Taylor-Joy living in Narnia

LOS ANGELES (AP)—In a span of seven months this year alone, Anya Taylor-Joy played a meddling British brat in "Emma," a Russian mutant with teleportation powers in the latest "X-Men" film, and an American orphan who turns out to be a chess phenom who can checkmate grown men by the time she's 8 in "The Queen's Gambit."

She's just getting started.

The 24-year-old just wrapped shooting "The Northman" alongside Nicole Kidman, Alexander Skarsgard, Willem Dafoe and Ethan Hawke. In October, Warner Bros. announced that Taylor-Joy will play Furiosa in the highly anticipated prequel to "Mad Max: Fury Road." Oh, and she'll have another movie coming out in April: Edgar Wright's psychological thriller, "Last Night in Soho."

AP PHOTO/PETER MORRISON

Anya Taylor-Joy poses for a portrait in Belfast's Titanic area in Northern Ireland on Tuesday, Oct. 6, 2020.

"When I was a kid, all I wanted to do was go to Narnia and, you know, fly to Neverland and go to all of these incredible places," Taylor-Joy recently told The Associated Press, which named her one of its Breakthrough Entertainers of 2020. "And now as an adult, I'm like, 'I live in Narnia. Like, this is amazing.'"

Taylor-Joy is "the busiest person I've ever met," said Marielle Heller, who plays Taylor Joy's foster mother in "The Queen's Gambit" and directed "A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood" and "Can You Ever Forgive Me?"

"I don't know how she's doing so many projects at the same time. It's really kind of mind-blowing," Heller said.

Netflix says "The Queen's Gambit" was its biggest scripted limited series ever and "Emma" received critical and box office acclaim, as did her big screen debut as a lead in Robert Eggers' 2015 horror hit "The Witch," which won Taylor-Joy a Gotham Independent Film Award for breakthrough actor. She's also drawn praise for her performances in M. Night Shyamalan's "Split," the dark comedy/thriller "Thoroughbreds" and BBC One's "Peaky Blinders."

All that success could easily have gone to Taylor-Joy's head, but Heller said she has managed to stay humble.

"The danger of young people having a career take off when they're really young—you can turn into a jerk. But she hasn't," Heller said. "She's a real joy to work with. You don't get that many roles back-to-back if you aren't somebody who's good to work with."

Taylor-Joy is so well-liked among those who've directed her, they've formed what's almost a club of adoration, calling each other and talking about how she's doing, said Autumn de Wilde, who directed Taylor-Joy in "Emma."

"We share a common bond in that we just 100% believe in her and we're so excited to see how our ideas will flower with her," de Wilde said. "She's not an empty vessel. She's a never-ending box of drawers and secret passageways."

Part of what makes Taylor-Joy so magnetic is her complete lack of narcissism, she said.

"A great photograph makes you wish you were there. I think she makes you wish you were there watching her work. That's because she's not looking at herself in the mirror, she's looking at the person she's acting with, she's feeling me through the lens as a director," de Wilde said.

Taylor-Joy was born in Miami and largely grew up in Argentina. She only spoke Spanish when her parents moved her and her five siblings to England, where Taylor-Joy struggled to fit in and learn English.

Although she has escaped the bullying she struggled with at the time, she's still learning how to be kind to herself.

"A friend of mine once told me, 'You would never speak to your friends the way that you speak about yourself,' which was huge," she said. "It's such a difficult journey for every individual to become friends with themselves. Some people are born and they just have it and I applaud those people. I was not one of them."

Though she says her skyrocketing fame "can be a bit intense," the journey has been "a beautiful process."

Record number of journalists jailed because of their work

NEW YORK (AP)—A record 274 journalists were in jail at the beginning of the month because of their work, nearly three dozen of them on charges of "false news," the Committee to Protect Journalists said on Tuesday.

It has been five straight years where at least 250 journalists were in custody, which the committee says illustrates a crackdown by repressive governments. China is the top jailer, followed by Turkey and Egypt. Political unrest in Belarus and Ethiopia have led to big increases of reporters in custody there, the committee said.

So far this year, 29 journalists have been killed, the committee said. That's up from 26 last year, but represents a decrease from earlier in the last decade, where 74 journalists were killed in both 2012 and 2013.

At least in part because of the coronavirus, fewer journalists are out in conflict situations where they could be hit by crossfire, said Courtney Radsch, the committee's advocacy director. Twenty of the journalists killed so far this year were murder victims.

No journalists in the United States were killed and none were imprisoned at the beginning of the month. But 110 journalists in the U.S. were arrested and criminally charged in 2020, and around 300 were assaulted, many while covering protests in the wake of George Floyd's death, according to the U.S. Press Freedom Tracker.

Gaynor to perform at Times Square New Year's Eve

NEW YORK (AP)—The New Year's Eve celebration in Times Square will be a celebration of perseverance, honoring essential workers and featuring Gloria Gaynor singing her anthem, "I Will Survive," organizers said Tuesday.

They had announced previously that the annual event will be virtual this year, with no public audience as in other years, and aimed at broadcast viewers.

Gaynor

The broadcasts that usually set up shop in Times Square will be there, including "Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve with Ryan Seacrest 2021," which will have a performance from Jennifer Lopez. Other performers include Cyndi Lauper and Billy Porter.

Organizers said they would be honoring essential workers as the "Heroes of 2020" and designate a group of them as Special Guests, an annual tradition since the 1990s.

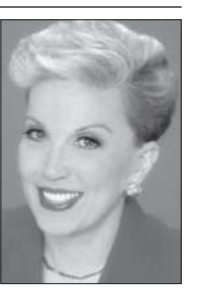
Tim Tompkins, president of the Times Square Alliance, said in a statement, "This year, it feels most appropriate to shine a spotlight on the individuals who are tirelessly leading our nation through hard times with unshakable strength, determination and poise."

Ex comes back for a second chance after being rejected

DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

FROM UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE



Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

DEAR ABBY: My ex had a prior relationship with my cousin "Earl." When she talked about her past relationships, a common theme emerged. Her partners were emotionally abusive—cheating, berating her, throwing rage fits where they screamed in her face and threw things. My own history is similar. My partners have done the same to me. (I do not engage in such behavior.)

Earl told her he still has feelings for her, despite the emotional abuse he had inflicted upon her. I confronted him and told him that what he did was inappropriate. Abby, when she heard about it, she dumped me and tried to get back together with Earl!

My cousin, having done work to remedy his issues, rejected her outright. He told her it would never work between them despite the lingering feelings. Now she has come back to me, saying she wants a serious relationship. Should I take her back?

SO MIXED-UP

DEAR SO MIXED-UP: Heck no. This woman has made clear that you are her second choice. Please don't take her up on her offer. You can't fix what's wrong with this very mixed-up woman, and you shouldn't waste your time trying because if you do, she will only cause you more pain.

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: My husband is smart, hard-working and a wonderful father to our young son. We hope to grow our family. However, my husband is a cigarette smoker and extremely defensive about any suggestion about him possibly quitting.

Both of his parents passed away from cancer relatively young, and his mother was a smoker, too. I'm terrified he will get sick and die young. Not only that, he constantly misses precious moments with our son, who stands at the window and cries when he sees his father go outside. I'm becoming resentful of the constant breaks he takes while I sit inside comforting our son.

I have tried reasoning with him and suggesting we ask a doctor for help, but he shuts me down and gets angry. How can I try to approach it again?

ANTI-SMOKER IN COLORADO

DEAR ANTI-SMOKER: You fell in love with an addict. Your husband is addicted to tobacco and appears not to understand or care about how it may affect himself or you and his son in the coming years. My advice would be to stop pressuring your husband for now and ask your doctor to refer you to a support group for friends and family members of people with a smoking addiction.

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: A man and a woman liked (and loved) each other in their teenage years, but they married different people. After a decade, the man sends wedding anniversary wishes to the woman on Facebook. Without any reply, the next day the woman blocks the man, and on the second day she deactivates her account on FB. What does it mean?

MYSTIFIED IN THE MIDDLE EAST

DEAR MYSTIFIED: It means the long-ago chapter of your storybook teen romance is over. She has moved on and so should you.

To order "How to Write Letters for All Occasions," send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby—Letter Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. Shipping and handling are included in the price.

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

LOOK, I'M NOT GOING TO BE YOUR LAWYER IF YOU CAN'T EVEN WALK A BLOCK WITHOUT PASTING SOMEONE WITH A SLUSHBALL!
IT'S NOT JUST "SOMEONE"! IT'S SUSIE! IT'S A GIRL! SANTA WOULD UNDERSTAND!
HE WOULD SO! WHAT? OH YEAH? I DON'T CARE! I'M GOING TO HIT SUSIE WITH A BIG, ICY SLUSHBALL!
OH REALLY? WELL, MAYBE THAT FURRY MUG OF YOURS NEEDS A SLUSHBALL, TOO! YEAH, YOU HEARD ME! OW! NO BITING!
SHH! SHH! HOLD IT!... DID YOU JUST HEAR A SNICKER?
12-17

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

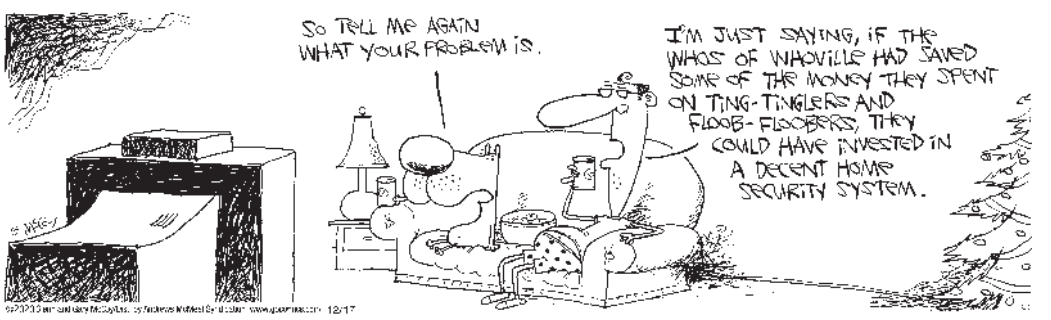
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

WHA?
I'M AN ELF NOW, TOO!
I WAS JUST WALKIN' ALONG AND POOF!
SO WEIRD. ONE OF US MUST BE DREAMING.
IF IT'S YOU, CAN YOU DREAM ME UP A PONY?
SHH. I'M WORKING ON A PET GODZILLA.
12-17
HARRELL

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy


SO TELL ME AGAIN WHAT YOUR PROBLEM IS.
I'M JUST SAYING, IF THE WHOS OF WHOVILLE HAD SAVED SOME OF THE MONEY THEY SPENT ON TING-TINGLERS AND FLOOB-FLOOBERS, THEY COULD HAVE INVESTED IN A DECENT HOME SECURITY SYSTEM.
12/17

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

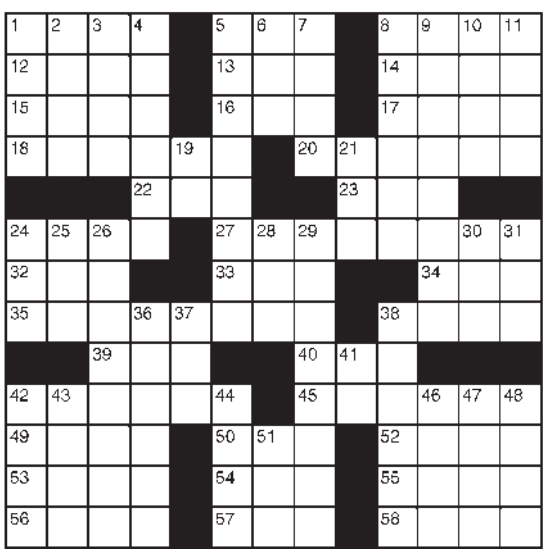
ACROSS
1 Netting
5 Globe
8 Skip
12 Dull pain
13 French article
14 News reporter Logan
15 Streetcar
16 — kwon do
17 Nest egg choices
18 Middle Eastern dip made from chickpeas
20 Gorge
22 Prefix with gram or center
23 Pos. opposite
24 Lettuce unit
27 Protracts
32 Happy hour venue
33 List-ending abbr.
34 Half of CXII
35 Tirade
38 Eve's mate
39 Antlered grazer
40 Sixth sense
42 Uses a blender
45 Ladle
49 "Would — to you?"
50 Med. plan option
52 Stow cargo
53 Must have
54 Outback bird
55 New York canal
56 Hardy lass
57 Favorite
58 Ticked (off)

DOWN
1 Calc. or trig
2 Beige
3 Counterfeit
4 Shortened, say
5 One who's not in the loop
6 Genetic letters
7 "Cheers" order
8 Martini garnishes
9 Bright yellow flower
10 Tehran's country
11 Use a stun gun
19 At bat
21 Director Lee
24 "Big Little Lies" airer
25 — Claire, WI
26 Blood lines
28 ACLU concerns
29 Misbehaved
30 Sch. founded by Jefferson
31 Singer McGraw
36 Isn't colorfast
37 Guitar's kin
38 Online program
41 Yes, to Juan
42 Ale measure
43 Peter Fonda's beekeeper role
44 News anchor Smith of CNBC
46 Use a fruit knife
47 Actress Falco
48 Marsh plant
51 Bovary's title (Abbr.)

Solution time: 24 mins.

S	E	A	L		B	B	C		A	G	R	A
I	N	L	A		R	E	A		H	O	U	R
G	Y	M	S	H	O	E	S		E	S	T	E
H	A	S	T	E			A	S	A	T	H	A
			L	Y	R	E		O	D	E		
E	G	G	Y		I	M	H	O		A	B	C
R	E	O		R	O	B	I	N		D	U	H
S	L	O		L	S	E	S		S	Y	N	E
		D	E	B		R	S	V	P			
E	S	S	A	Y	S			E	A	V	E	S
B	A	H	S		G	I	F	T	S	F	T	S
A	I	O	F		T	K	O		M	F	A	N
Y	E	W	S		S	E	X		S	S	T	S

Yesterday's answer 12-17



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955!** 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Milla Jovovich, 45; Bill Pullman, 67; Eugene Levy, 74; Ernie Hudson, 75.

Happy Birthday: Pay attention to the way you present yourself to the world. The little changes you make will fetch compliments that boost your confidence this year. Trust in what you know and how you do things before you let someone convince you to do something differently. Take control, offer hope and have a positive attitude, and you'll surpass your expectations. Your numbers are 3, 14, 25, 29, 32, 39, 46.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Follow your heart, intelligence and intuition, and you'll end up exactly where you want to be. An agreement with someone special will give you the hope and assurance you need to move forward with your plans. Romance is featured. ✪✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Be careful not to commit to something that will be difficult to honor. An emotional situation will lead to a change of heart and a costly endeavor. Look for a substantial opportunity before you cut ties with a sure thing. ✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Invest more time and energy in something you want to pursue. An energetic approach will encourage others to pitch in and help you reach your objective. Make plans with someone you love, and it will lead to a closer relationship. ✪✪✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Limit what you spend. Rethink your strategy, and you'll come up with amendments that will save you time and money. Hard work will pay off. Work alone if it will deter others from interfering with your plans. ✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* You'll have plenty of opportunities if you stick to your game plan. Refuse to let anyone persuade you to take part in something that won't benefit you. It's time to put your needs first and strive to reach your goals. ✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* The changes you make will be disruptive if you haven't discussed what you want to do with a partner or a family member. To achieve the best results, be upfront and get those you care about involved in your plans. ✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Don't let uncertainty take over. You have a limited amount of time to make a decision and put your plans in motion. Get what has to be done out of the way, and concentrate on making a positive difference. ✪✪✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Don't let your emotions limit what you can achieve. Look for an opportunity, and seize the moment. Take a creative approach to life and the way you do things, and you will encounter individuals who have something valuable to offer. ✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Get busy, stay active and strive to look your best. Take your health and well-being seriously, and you will feel good about your accomplishments. Refuse to let anyone interfere with your plans or push you to do something costly or debilitating. ✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Stay calm, relaxed and in control. Apply discipline when faced with a challenge, and you will overcome whatever obstacles stand between you and your goal. Anger or aggressive behavior will set you back. Be smart, direct and persistent. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Apply pressure when needed to get your way. Speak up, state your case and make things happen. Taking an aggressive and passionate approach will make a difference to the outcome of a situation in dire need of an adjustment. Romance is favored. ✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Don't get involved in someone's problems. Stay focused on opportunities, finishing what you start and doing your own thing. The less you rely on others, the easier it will be to reach your goal. Don't let confusion or uncertainty weaken your position. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are inventive, outgoing and smart. You are convincing and aggressive.

Visit Eugenialast.com, or join Eugenia on Twitter/Facebook/LinkedIn.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

			3	5	7		1	
	1					8		2
							6	
2			1					6
3								5
5					8			4
	6							
4		9					2	
	7		6	4	1			

Difficulty Level ★★★ 12/17

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

4	5	7	3	1	9	6	8	2
8	1	2	5	4	6	3	9	7
3	9	6	7	8	2	4	5	1
1	6	5	4	2	7	8	3	9
7	8	3	9	6	1	2	4	5
9	2	4	8	3	5	1	7	6
6	7	8	1	5	4	9	2	3
5	3	1	2	9	8	7	6	4
2	4	9	6	7	3	5	1	8

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

EXISTENTIALISM **Solution: 10 letters**

Q	U	E	L	T	T	A	B	H	S	T	C	A	L	M
T	U	N	B	I	N	D	T	L	D	C	A	B	A	L
F	C	E	C	G	C	U	F	S	I	S	I	R	C	M
R	I	A	S	E	R	I	N	E	L	V	I	H	R	N
E	D	T	R	T	R	O	T	D	E	I	I	I	T	S
E	E	D	U	T	I	T	T	A	M	L	F	N	I	E
D	N	I	F	T	S	O	A	R	M	F	I	E	G	I
O	T	A	C	H	B	B	N	I	A	G	D	N	V	R
M	I	A	T	J	C	Y	A	S	N	E	A	C	G	O
Q	T	S	E	U	L	A	V	K	S	T	H	R	N	E
U	Y	C	T	P	R	B	O	P	I	O	Y	O	P	H
E	T	W	M	H	D	E	A	R	I	U	I	O	A	T
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Abstract, Actions, Acts, Affirm, Angst, Approach, Attitude, Battle, Being, Bind, Cabal, Calm, Choice, Crisis, Despair, Dilemma, Epiphany, Ethics, Feeling, Find, Freedom, Hope, Humans, Identity, Imply, Life, Living, Nature, Objects, Pragmatic, Questions, Quests, Risk, Self, Shame, Style, Theories, Think, Truth, Uncertainty, Values, Vision, Void, Will

Yesterday's Answer: Hard Rock

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Winners, losers emerge as Giannis OK's supermax

MILWAUKEE— Giannis Antetokounmpo decided to stay home in Milwaukee, in part because he believes he can win there (his biggest concern), but the fact the Bucks can guarantee him $228.2 million over the next five years didn't hurt.

Antetokounmpo's decision was the biggest player decision in the NBA since LeBron James decided to come to Los Angeles, and there have been reactions and reverberations around the league. As with every big move, there are some winners and losers, and while there are far more winners in this case let's break it down.

Winner: Antetokounmpo. The man just locked in $228.2 million. Even Steve Ballmer thinks that's a lot of money. Antetokounmpo also gets to stay in the only city he has called home in the United States — he's said he's not drawn to the bright lights of Los Angeles or Miami—and the first city he and his family ever felt safe, comfortable, and welcomed.

Antetokounmpo used his leverage to pressure the Bucks to upgrade the roster and only signed this deal after being convinced that the Bucks were serious about winning — and willing to spend to do it. Antetokounmpo knew what he wanted and got it.

Winner: Milwaukee Bucks and Bucks' fans. The Milwaukee Bucks locked up the two-time reigning MVP as he heads into his prime, a move that should make them contenders for each of the next five years (if they're not, it's more about the Bucks front office than Antetokounmpo). That's a win for Milwaukee, a win for their fans, and a win for small and mid-sized markets around the league. Do most things right, build a winner around them, and you can keep a superstar.

This does not guarantee the Bucks a title in the next few years. According to odds provided by our partner, PointsBet, it's just slightly better than 50/50 that Antetokounmpo wins a ring with the Bucks.

Winner: Houston Rockets (and maybe the Washington Wizards). With teams not able to find a superstar through free agency, suddenly James Harden looks a little bit better. He's a former MVP and one of the top five players on the planet, a guy who can drop 30 a night and do it efficiently. The concerns about him being 31 with a lot of miles on that body (on and off the court), the concerns about having to re-sign him in two years at age 33, the concerns about how well he plays with other stars are all still there, but for teams that don't have options he looks a little better. Houston continues to ask for more than anyone will offer for The Beard right now, but this helps the Rockets' leverage.

Miami has said it is interested, and if it can get a deal done for Tyler Herro, some other young players, salary guys (Kelly Olynyk, Andre Iguodala), and a couple of picks, it might well be worth it.

Unless the Heat want to wait and see what the Wizards do with Bradley Beal. Like Houston, Washington is sitting in a better spot to trade its star now, except the Wizards have no intention of doing so—at least in the short term. They want to see if they can make a playoff run with Beal and Russell Westbrook. But if that goes sideways by the trade deadline, or by next offseason, Washington may feel differently, and it will be in a strong position.

Winner: Jrue Holiday. Antetokounmpo just signed a max contract, and Khris Middleton will make $35.5 million next season on top of that. Throw in $13.3 million for Brook Lopez at center, a combined $12.3 million for D.J. Augustin and Pat Connaughton, and contracts to round out the roster, and suddenly the Bucks are a team over the tax line and with limited ways to improve for the season after this one. This means they must re-sign Holiday (something they needed to do anyway after giving up a boatload of picks to land him).

Holiday, who has a $26.7 million player option next season, has all the leverage and will likely get a contract that starts at about that number and extends out for years. Holiday is good, and should be a better playoff fit in the backcourt for the Bucks than Eric Bledsoe, but he has the leverage to get paid like a superstar now.

Losers: Miami/Dallas/Toronto. These teams are not really losers, but they are teams that now have to recalibrate. All of them kept cap space or trade options open to land Antetokounmpo if he decided to move on from Milwaukee. Now each one has to adjust.

Miami is in the best position. They already used their cap space to lock up Bam Adebayo, and they have a lot of young players that would be interesting to a team looking to trade a superstar. This is a team that made the Finals a year ago, is still poised to chase another star (via trade or sign-and-trade), and will be in that position for years.

Toronto is retooling the roster around Pascal Siakam and OG Anunoby at the forward spots, and they locked up Fred VanVleet this offseason, but the Raptors now need to strike a deal with Masai Ujiri and then go find their next star.

Dallas is in the toughest spot of the three because they lack picks and young players they are willing to give up in a trade, and this free agent class has gotten a lot weaker in the past few days. There's no clear path now to Dallas adding a third star because…

Loser: 2021 free agency. LeBron James signed an extension to stay with the Lakers, and as expected Anthony Davis did the same—and no short contracts, the Lakers have them for three years. Paul George signed a max deal to stay with the Clippers. Now Antetokounmpo is off the market.

The much-hyped free agent class of 2021 suddenly looks very thin. Kawhi Leonard is the biggest name, but with the George re-signing in Los Angeles—and the fact Leonard forced himself back to SoCal—it is widely expected around the NBA Leonard will stay with the Clippers. Who are the best free agents after that? Rudy Gobert, and maybe Victor Oladipo depending upon how he plays this season. Those are good players, and this is a deeper free agent class than this past one, but the franchise-changing talent at the top is gone.

AP

In this March 29, 2018 file photo, Milwaukee Bucks' Giannis Antetokounmpo dunks against the Golden State Warriors' Kevin Durant during the first half of an NBA game in Oakland, Calif.

High hopes in Brooklyn with KD, Kyrie ready

NEW YORK (AP) — Kevin Durant and Kyrie Irving sent expectations soaring when they decided to come to Brooklyn.

The Nets can at last try to live up to them.

After waiting a year and a half since the free agency haul that transformed their franchise, the Nets finally got their superstar duo on the court in their preseason opener and needed just one quarter to show why hopes are so high.

Durant is healthy, Irving is healthy and together they look explosive, the biggest reason the Nets are considered one of the Eastern Conference favorites even with a rookie coach in Steve Nash

"It's a different show, it's a different stage and it's a new beginning in terms of what we're building and moving forward with the pieces we have here. And that includes 7-11, so get to know us," Irving said, referring to their uniform numbers.

The good friends decided to team up in Brooklyn as free agents in 2019, but by then Durant was recovering from surgery to repair an Achilles tendon he had ruptured weeks earlier in the NBA Finals with Golden State. He sat out all last season, while Irving ended up limited to only 20 games because of a shoulder injury.

So it wasn't until the first game of this preseason when they got on the court together. In just 9 1/2 minutes, Durant and Irving outscored the Washington Wizards by themselves, combining for 23 points on 8-of-9 shooting. The Nets went 13 of 17 (76.5%) in the quarter in their debut under new Nash.

It won't always be so easy, but there will be nights when the Nets could look unstoppable.

"It's still early in the season and there was COVID and guys have been separated all summer and doing their own thing, so it's going to take some time for us to figure out the best way for us to approach this thing," Durant said earlier in training camp. "But we're looking forward to that challenge."

The Nets play the NBA's season opener at home against Golden State on Dec. 22, followed by a trip to Boston on Christmas Day. That puts Durant first and then Irving against their former teams.

Nash, the Hall of Fame point guard, has no coaching experience. But his staff has plenty, led by two-time Coach of the Year Mike D'Antoni, Nash's former coach in Phoenix who signed on as an assistant. Jacque Vaughn stayed on after leading the Nets to the playoffs following Kenny Atkinson's departure, and Amare Stoudemire, Nash's pick-and-roll partner with the Suns, is also on the bench.

Harden scores 12 in preseason debut

Harden was back in a Houston uniform.

It's still unclear how many more times that'll happen.

The three-time defending NBA scoring champion made his preseason debut with the Rockets on Tuesday night and scored 12 points in 21 minutes and Houston beat the San Antonio Spurs. 112-98. ***(AP/NBC)***

MLB pitches later start date, pay cuts

NEW YORK—After conferring with medical experts about the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines, Major League Baseball asked the players' union if it would consider pushing the start of the 2021 season back by about a month, sources confirmed Tuesday, the informal request made two weeks ago and declined by the union.

The league has asserted it would use the coming weeks to consider the viability of opening spring training camps and the season on time, given the ongoing pandemic, the recent vaccine availability and the economic impact of potentially beginning another season without fans in ballparks. The phone call to the union was intended to start a conversation that is likely to continue as the country's health landscape changes.

The union has been adamant that a full, 162-game season is not only achievable, but required under the terms of the current collective bargaining agreement. When the league proposed the season be delayed, the union asked if players would be paid for a full season. The answer was no, that they would be paid on a pro rata basis.

AP
Major League Baseball has asked the players' union if it would consider pushing the start of the 2021 season back by about a month.

Five months after union chief Tony Clark, during contentious negotiations to start the 2020 season, demanded of the league, "Tell us when and where," the union contends that this time it has its when and where: The third week of February, across spring training sites in Arizona and Florida, followed by April 1 opening day in 15 big-league ballparks.

What appears to be coming, then, is a replay of the weeks leading to last summer's opener, in which the owners and the players bickered over the money left over from the pandemic's reckoning. No longer bound by the March agreement that gave owners leverage over when the 2020 season would start, how long it would last and how the players would be paid, the union insists its players will show up with their duffel bags on schedule. Their argument: They've already played a (shortened) season under strict health and safety protocols, therefore proving the viability of a 2021 season.

Health officials have told the league it would be best to wait until players and personnel could be vaccinated. The timing of that is vague, however, and could vary from state to state.

Union officials agree that league-wide vaccinations are preferable, of course. They also contend the season could start under the same protocols of the past regular season. Then, as the vaccines become more available, those protocols could be lightened or discarded.

Meanehile, the league is left to fret over what the latest surge in cases means for its season, if and when the vaccine will slow that increase and how to manage a moving health—and economic—target. It had hoped that a month or so delay would allow the sport to avoid some hard-hit areas and buy time for the vaccine to gain traction. The union views this not as an uncertainty, or perhaps not an uncertainty that has not already been safeguarded against, but as a time to get back to work.

Tokyo Games relay opens in 100 days with 10,000 torchbearers

TOKYO (AP) — The torch relay for the postponed Tokyo Games will start in just over three months, and it faces the same questions as the Olympics about being held safely during the coronavirus pandemic.

Organizers said Tuesday the relay is set to begin on March 25 from the northeastern prefecture of Fukushima. This was also to have been the starting point for the relay before the Olympics were postponed nine months ago.

This coastal area of Japan was devastated almost 10 years ago by an earthquake and tsunami and the subsequent meltdown of three nuclear reactors.

The relay will travel across Japan and involve 10,000 runners and tens of thousands of officials. This does not include local residents who will want to see the torch go by.

"The COVID-19 countermeasures will be worked on continuously for the torch relay; the audience, the torchbearers as well as the officials who are related to the program," Yukihiko Nunomura, vice director general of the Tokyo Olympic organizing committee, said during an online news conference.

The relay is sponsored by Toyota and Coca-Cola—two heavyweight Olympic sponsors. There was some discussion early about the possibility of eliminating the event for cost and safety reasons, but that idea seemed to be quickly discarded.

The relay will last for 121 days and pass through 859 municipalities—pretty much as was planned before the postponement.

"We wanted to simplify the program as much as possible, trying to minimize the number of vehicles and audience as well," Nunomura said. "As you know the torch relay will go all over Japan and we will have a lot of participants."

The Tokyo Skytree, the tallest tower in Japan, was lighted in gold on Tuesday to commemorate 100 days until the relay begins.

The postponed Olympics are scheduled to open on July 23, 2021, and are set to include the full complement of 11,000 athletes. The Paralympics will add 4,400 more.

Organizers of the Olympics and torch relay are waiting until early next year to provide specific details about countermeasures for the coronavirus. They have been encouraged about the recent roll out of vaccines.

"A few vaccines are now being distributed and are actually being used," Tokyo Gov. Yuriko Koike said Monday in an interview with The Associated Press. "It's a ray of hope."

Japan has seen new infections spike across the country in the last several weeks. On Saturday, new cases totaled 3,041—the first time above 3,000.

Japan, with a population of 125 million, has handled the pandemic relatively well with just over 2,500 deaths attributed to COVID-19.

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was thankful for the recognition, he valued more the impact of having a cross country season for students at this time of the COVID-19 pandemic

"Our students wanted to run, they wanted to go out and do something to relieve themselves of the mental and emotional stress this pandemic has caused them. They are very active in sports, especially in running and knowing that the cross country season may not take place really made them sad," Pang said.

"Fortunately, the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force allowed NMA and PSS to go ahead with the cross country races. They let us run provided we follow the safety protocols and that's very good for our students, our kids," the Agape coach and school administrator added.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Saipan International School runners receive their boys high school perpetual trophy during the awards ceremony for the 2020-2021 PSS/NMA All Schools Cross Country Series last Friday at the Saipan Vegas grounds.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Saipan International School students are awarded with the perpetual trophy for topping the co-ed elementary division races.

Pang is pleased that their students did well this season and attributed the team's continued success in athletics events, such as in cross country, to their constant training.

"Most of our students live in our dormitory so that's an advantage because we get to train together often," Pang said.

Though the cross country school meet has been completed, Agape runners are still practicing as they will be competing in the Christmas Island Relay later this month.

"Our students have a lot of potential, but they need to continue training to stay in form and do well in competitions. I know this is a difficult time because of the pandemic, but it's up to ask adults to find opportunities for our children/students so that they will stay healthy and active despite the challenging conditions we are in," Pang said.

Meanwhile, SIS also won perpetual trophies last Friday, as the Geckos took the boys high school and co-ed elementary crowns.

WIN

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6 event.

MRA's series of ATV races for the Pee Wee I Class so far have produced three different winners, as Theresa Borja ruled the opening leg.

In the Peewee II race, Jonoah Santos stamped his class anew, as he bested leg one winner Keenon Togawa, Rylie Manglona, Kimason Cabrera, and Harley Susulin. Cabrera joined the division race for the first time, while Rylie competed in his second leg, and Keenon, Harley, and Santos have made appearances in the first three events.

The series will continue this Sunday with Santos eyeing his third straight win in the Peewee II Class and Keenon hoping to regain the driver's seat.

In the Peewee I Class ATV, spectators would like to see Borja back to grind it out with Brooklyn and Reyes, while the dirt bike race in the same class will be interesting with the changes in the winner's circle in the first three events.

This weekend's fourth leg will also have races in the Expert Open, Veterans Open, and Novice Open classes with Shane Alvarez, Corry Pangelinan, and Melvin Cepeda hoping to pick up where they left off after getting last Sunday's top honors.

Off the pitch: Kanoa FC takes charge

A player's performance on the field is important. So does off the field.

"Being a player isn't always about how you perform on the field, but about who you are off the field, what you do when you are not playing," said Sebastien Manabat, who was among the Kanoa Football Club players that participated in a clean-up and beautification drive in Garapan early this month.

Kanoa FC recently signed up with the Public Private Partnership initiative of the Governor's Council of Economic Advisers and partnered with the Beach Road Tourism Development, Inc. in conducting improvement projects in one of the villages frequented by tourists. More than 30 players and officials of the club spruced up the median from Bank of Guam to the Garapan Fire Station by repainting them, planting additional flowers, and cleaning the area.

"We are thankful for the opportunity given to us, for the chance to do something for the community," said the Kanoa FC defender.

"This year has been very challenging to us because of the COVID-19 pandemic. We did not get to play, we miss school, and even just doing simple things, like going out, are restricted. However, with a lot of time in our hands, we are grateful we are able to use it for a worthy cause by participating in this destination enhancement campaign," Manabat added.

Hannah Santos, another Kanoa FC youth player who participated in the cleanup, said getting involved in improvement projects for the various sites in the CNMI right at this time is just perfect.

"With the adverse effects the pandemic has brought upon to our islands and the lack of tourists, we, as one community, should take this as an opportunity to improve and beautify the CNMI. The islands' natural beauty is an integral part of our tourism economy," Santos said.

Both Santos and Manabat have appealed to the community to do something to keep the island vibrant and clean.

"Even if it is just picking up trash while we're walking or running along the road," Manabat said.

"Everyone must hold the responsibility of maintaining the cleanliness of our island, whether it be through participating in a volunteer event or by simply throwing our trash properly," Santos seconded.

Meanwhile, Kanoa FC president Merlie Tolentino said improvement projects at the Garapan median will continue. In partnership with the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. and the Marianas Visitors Authority, Kanoa FC has installed Christmas lights and decorations in the area to spread the yuletide spirit, while there will be regular trimming of the plants and patch repair work.

"We are pleased to have not just our club officials and coaches take part in this initiative, but also our young players, as this kind of activities teach them values and skills that they can practice on and off the pitch," Tolentino said.

Kanoa FC general secretary Cristy Villaflor, on the other hand, said that taking part in the destination enhancement initiative is a good experience for the club's young players.

"We are trying to instill in them the value of giving back and caring for the environment as they are the future leaders of our community," Villaflor said. ***(PR)***

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Kanoa Footballl Club players repaint the medians in Garapan early this month as part of the group's cleanup and beautification drive in the village and in support of the destination enhancement initiative of the Governor's Council of Economic Advisers.

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Agape runners keep great stride amidst pandemic

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Agape Christian School went home with the most team championships when perpetual trophies were awarded to winners in the 2020-2021 Public School System/Northern Marianas Athletics All Schools Cross Country Series last Friday at the Saipan Vegas grounds.

Agape took the boys and girls middle school perpetual trophies plus the same hardware in the girls high school division.

The Torchbearers swept the middle school races (boys and girls U14) after scoring 18 and 17 points (teams with the least scores won the division) to successfully defend their titles. Agape, behind second finisher Barbara Wang, defeated Saipan International School (20 points) in the girls race, while its boys crew led by top finisher Peter Peng also won over SIS (23) and Saipan Community School (41 points).

In the high school division (girls U18), Agape had Emma Pang and Grace Shi making it to the Top 3 (behind champion Tiana Cabrera of SIS) to notch first place, way ahead of the Lady Geckos, 14-34.

Agape coach pastor Kok Pang joined his runners in accepting the perpetual trophies last weekend and though he

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Agape Christian School coach Kok Pang, front row left, joins his middle school runners in accepting the perpetual trophy presented by Northern Marianas Athletics, Public School System, and Northern Marianas Sports Association officials during the awards ceremony for the 2020-2021 PSS/NMA All Schools Cross Country Series last Friday at the Saipan Vegas grounds.

Brooklynn, Trey get first win

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Young riders Trey Manglona and Brooklynn Susulin broke into the win column of the Marianas Racing Association's series of competition after topping their respective divisions last Sunday at the Kan Pacific grounds.

Trey ruled the Peewee I Class (dirt bike), prevailing in a strong field of eight riders, while Brooklynn clinched the top honors in the ATV race.

Last Sunday's event was Trey's second attempt to hit the top of the podium. He joined the Dec. 6 race after missing the first leg and placed second on Heat 2, but missed Heat 1 to land at the No. 4 spot overall. He returned at the racetrack for the Dec. 13 race and was pitted against his previous opponents and this time won over Bently Koshiro, second leg top finisher Zane Fujihira, Tate Manglona, Baby Joe Santos, Rockson Cabrera, Sage Togawa, and Keoni Rosario. Cabrera and Rosario debuted in the series.

In the ATV Peewee I Class, Brooklynn triumphed in her one-on-one showdown against Melvin Reyes, who missed gaining back-to-back victories after notching first place in the Dec.

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JOSEPH CHIN
Brooklynn Susulin, seen here competing in the Dec. 6 race, won the ATV event last Sunday at the Kan Pacific grounds.

JOSEPH CHIN
Riders in the Peewee I Class in action during last Sunday's Marianas Racing Association competition at the Kan Pacific grounds.